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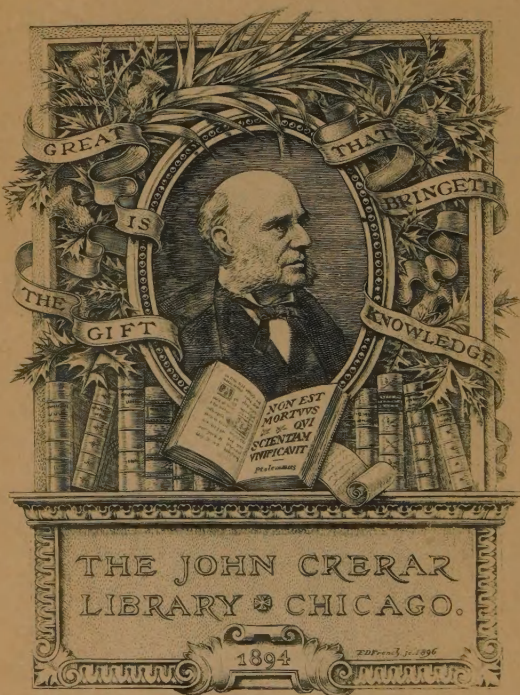


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# ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING

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REV. WILLIAM MARTIN, B.D.



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ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING



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BY

THE REV. WILLIAM MARTIN, B.D.

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PREFACE.

THIS short treatise was not written with a view to publication; but, at the instance of several friends, I have ventured to offer it to the public, deeply conscious that it only touches the fringes of a most important subject. The War has directed attention to many ethical questions, which will be the subject of much discussion in the future. The broad principles which underlie Christian ethics are fully stated in St. Paul's Epistles, and no apology is necessary for restating them in these critical days of our national life.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the tutors of Wolsey College, Oxford, for the help they have given me in preparing the work, and for their wise criticisms.

WILLIAM MARTIN.

November, 1917.

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# SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

	PAGES
PREFACE . . . . .	v
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	xi-xii

## CHAPTER I.

SOURCES OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING . . . . .	1-23
I. Sources of Teaching . . . . .	1-15
(a) Græco-Roman Influence . . . . .	3-6
(b) Jewish Influences, especially the O. T. . . . .	7-9
(c) Life and Teaching of Jesus . . . . .	9-12
(d) Working of St. Paul's own Mind . . . . .	12-15
II. Documents . . . . .	16-23

## CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING . . . . .	24-36
(a) Emphasis on Passive Virtues . . . . .	27-29
(b) Breadth . . . . .	29-32
(c) Symmetry and Balance . . . . .	32-34
(d) Centre in Christ . . . . .	34-36

## CHAPTER III.

ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY . . . . .	37-46
---------------------------------	-------

# SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER IV.

	PAGES
PAGAN MORALITY . . . . .	47-66
Pre-Socratic . . . . .	48-50
Post-Socratic . . . . .	50-51
Pauline Scheme of Virtues compared with the Platonic and Aristotelian . . . . .	52-66
(a) 1. Wisdom . . . . .	52-54
2. Courage . . . . .	54-56
3. Temperance . . . . .	56-58
4. Uprightness . . . . .	58-59
(b) Humility and Love . . . . .	59-61
(c) Superiority of Christian Ethics . . . . .	61-65
Present Need of Ethical Revival . . . . .	65-66

## CHAPTER V.

THE PASSIVE VIRTUES . . . . .	67-75
1. ταπεινοφροσύνη . . . . .	69-71
2. αὐτάρκεια . . . . .	71
3. ὑπομονή . . . . .	72
4. μακροθυμία . . . . .	72-73
5. πραΰτης . . . . .	73
6. ἐπιείκεια . . . . .	73-74
7. χρηστότης . . . . .	74
8. ἀνεξίκακος . . . . .	74
Forgiveness . . . . .	74-75

## CHAPTER VI.

THE PAULINE IDEAL . . . . .	76-79
-----------------------------	-------

## CHAPTER VII.

DIVERGENCE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS ESTAB- LISHED BY THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF FORGIVENESS	80-83
---	-------



# SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGES
THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES . . . . .	84-95
Lecky's Charge against Christianity . . . . .	84-86
(a) St. Paul as a Thinker . . . . .	86-91
(b) Place of Intellectual Virtues in Church History . . . . .	91-93
(c) Place in the Life of the Church To-day . . . . .	93-95

## CHAPTER IX.

ETHICS OF SPEECH . . . . .	96-109
St. Paul's List of Sins of the Tongue . . . . .	96-98
(a) Idle Words . . . . .	98-101
(b) Evil Speaking . . . . .	101-104
(c) Corrupt Speech . . . . .	104-105
(d) Untruthfulness . . . . .	106-109

## CHAPTER X.

ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY . . . . .	110-126
(a) Need for Controversy . . . . .	110-117
(b) Dangers to the Controversialist . . . . .	117-123
(c) St. Paul as a Controversialist . . . . .	123-126

## CHAPTER XI.

ANGER AND THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES . . . . .	127-136
(a) The Passive Virtues must not be abused . . . . .	129-132
(b) Must not be omitted . . . . .	132-135
(c) Warnings against Abuse of 'Anger' . . . . .	135-136

## CHAPTER XII.

ASCETICISM—TRUE AND FALSE . . . . .	137-154
(a) Asceticism of Dualism . . . . .	141-146
(b) Asceticism of Self-discipline . . . . .	146-149
Its Subsequent History in the Church . . . . .	149-154

## SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER XIII.

	PAGES
CASES OF CONSCIENCE . . . . .	155-165
( <i>a</i> ) St. Paul's Teaching to the Weak . . . . .	158-160
( <i>b</i> ) St. Paul's Teaching to the Strong . . . . .	160-163
( <i>c</i> ) St. Paul's Teaching on 'Judging' . . . . .	163-165

### CHAPTER XIV.

ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE . . . . .	166-198
( <i>a</i> ) Social Order . . . . .	166-168
( <i>b</i> ) Benevolence . . . . .	168-177
( <i>c</i> ) Purity . . . . .	177-183
( <i>d</i> ) Marriage . . . . .	183-191
( <i>e</i> ) Relative Duties . . . . .	191-198
The Christian Home . . . . .	191-194
Parents and Children . . . . .	194-195
Servants . . . . .	195-197
Slavery . . . . .	197-198

### CHAPTER XV.

ST. PAUL AND CHURCH ORGANIZATION . . . . .	199-208
Appointment and Duties of Elders, &c. . . . .	199-203
Qualifications of Church Officers . . . . .	203-205
Commissions to Timothy and Titus . . . . .	205-208

### CHAPTER XVI.

THE INFLUENCE OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICS IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH . . . . .	209-222
In the sub-Apostolic Age . . . . .	209-213
Ethics of Apologists of Second Century . . . . .	213-215
Ethics of Early Greek Fathers . . . . .	215-216
Augustine and St. Paul . . . . .	217-218
Pauline Influence in Reformation Period . . . . .	218-219
St. Paul's Ethics and the Present Age . . . . .	219-222

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# ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

## CHAPTER I.

### SOURCES OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

THERE are two preliminary questions to be considered in connection with the ethical teaching of St. Paul: Whence did he derive this teaching? In what documents has it been preserved?

#### I. SOURCES OF TEACHING.

The first of these questions is important; because Pauline ethics, even more than Pauline doctrine, stands in a certain lineal succession, and bears the traces of its descent. The morality of the New Testament was not an entirely new thing, and although it would be wrong to regard it as a mere development, yet it had a close connection with the morality of the Old Testament and Apocrypha. The late Dean Church in a well-known work<sup>1</sup> has sketched the gradual unfolding

<sup>1</sup> *The Discipline of the Christian Character.*

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

of the Christian character from its initial stages to its culmination in Christ. The reader who does not look back cannot understand the full significance of the teaching of St. Paul. Our information regarding the early life of the great Apostle is meagre; and this makes it more difficult to measure the influences of the various forces which bore upon him. Three great civilisations met in him: he was by descent a Jew; was born in a Greek city; and was a Roman citizen. His life, therefore, was influenced by streams of thought issuing from Palestine, from Greece, and from Rome. Each of them can be traced in his teaching. It is necessary also to take into account elements in his teaching which were due to his remarkable personality.

We may now proceed to examine the sources of the Apostle's teaching under four heads:

- (a) Græco-Roman.
- (b) Jewish, especially that of the Old Testament.
- (c) The life and words of Jesus Christ.
- (d) The working of St. Paul's powerful mind upon the morally fruitful idea of the believer's union with Christ.

Our inquiry commences therefore at the circumference and works towards the centre.

## SOURCES.

### (a) GRÆCO-ROMAN INFLUENCE.

The extent of this has been warmly disputed. Sabatier can find no traces of it in St. Paul's teaching ; on the other hand, Ramsay regards it as constantly present in his words and writings. The facts are clear.

(1) St. Paul was not a Palestinian Jew, brought up in particularism, but a Hellenistic Jew. He had the wider thought which came from a knowledge of the Greek language, and a consequent introduction to Greek literature, and to Greek ideas. The result of the conquest of the Eastern world by Alexander the Great had an enormous effect upon Asia Minor and Syria. 'Even in Palestine itself,' says Canon Hicks, 'there were Hellenists, who not only read their Scriptures in Greek, but who also prayed in Greek.'<sup>1</sup> The Jews of the Diaspora might endeavour to train their children in strict adherence to the Law, but they could not keep them apart from the prevailing ideas of the peoples among whom they dwelt. The Septuagint was the 'Bible' of the Hellenistic Jews, not only in its birthplace in Egypt, but also wherever the Jewish race had spread. These Jews were also greatly influenced by the works of Philo. The allegorical method

<sup>1</sup> *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*. Vol. IV. : St. Paul and Hellenism.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

of Old Testament exegesis adopted by this writer is found in St. Paul's Epistles, *e.g.*, in Gal. iv. 22-26, but is used sparingly.<sup>1</sup> Another influence was the universalism taught by the Book of Wisdom ; this influence can be clearly traced in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.<sup>2</sup>

Although St. Paul must have been acquainted with the Hebrew Bible, yet it is from the Septuagint that most of his quotations are taken, which shows that its text was the one most familiar to him.

(2) Not only was St. Paul a Hellenistic Jew, but he was a Jew of Tarsus. This city was in his day famous as a centre of learning.<sup>3</sup> In its University, which, Strabo says, rivalled in some respects the sister Universities of Athens and Alexandria, a long line of famous philosophers taught their students the principles of the Stoic Philosophy. Ramsay believes that St. Paul was at one time a student in the University. Certainly it was from a Stoic poet (Aratus, a Cilician) that St. Paul quoted at Athens. We do not know at what age the young Saul left Tarsus to receive instruction from Gamaliel, but we do know that

<sup>1</sup> See Jowett's Essay, *St. Paul and Philo*, Epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans, vol. i., p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> See Sanday and Headlam's *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 51, 52.

<sup>3</sup> See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, article 'Tarsus.'



## SOURCES.

he spent at least ten years in that city after his conversion. With his receptive mind he was not likely to be uninfluenced by the prevailing tone of his place of residence. The addresses of the Apostle at Lystra and Athens show that he was ready to acknowledge all that was good in heathenism. His open mind made it possible for him to gain the friendship of the Asiarchs at Ephesus, and to secure the respect of Festus at Cæsarea.

(3) St. Paul, the Tarsian Jew, was also a Roman citizen, and therefore occupied a position superior to that held by the ordinary provincial. His consciousness that he was a citizen of Imperial Rome is manifest in the ease and dignity with which he bore himself before Roman officials. That he approved of the great ideas of the Roman Imperial Government is witnessed by his adoption of those ideas in his teaching. The welding of the Empire into a unity under Roman law and custom,<sup>1</sup> the introduction of the cult of the

<sup>1</sup> "One of the most remarkable sides of the history of Rome is the growth of ideals, which found their realisation and completion in the Christian Empire. Universal citizenship, universal religion, a universal Church, all were ideas the Empire was slowly working out, but which it could not realise till it merged itself in Christianity. Paul from the first directed his steps in the path the Church had to tread. He was beyond doubt one of those great creative geniuses whose policy marks out the lines on which history has to move for generations and even centuries afterwards."—Ramsay's *Paul the Traveller*, pp. 138-9.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Roman Imperial power, incarnate in the Emperor, may have given St. Paul the ideas, of winning the Roman world for Christ, and of uniting all the Churches in one great unity, obedient to one Head, and inspired by one Spirit.

While these facts must be taken into account among the sources of St. Paul's ethical teaching, their importance should not be exaggerated. St. Paul himself regarded Jerusalem and Gamaliel as the great formative influences of his younger days.<sup>1</sup>

It is upon these that he lays the greatest emphasis ; but yet it cannot be denied that there are striking ideas in St. Paul's ethics, which show signs of having their sources in Greek philosophical literature. Of all the Apostles with whose works and writings we are acquainted, St. Paul stands pre-eminent in his interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a message to the whole world, and delivered that message freed from the restrictions of Jewish particularism. The seed from which sprang the wonderful moral and spiritual teaching of St. Paul must be sought elsewhere ; the soil, in which the seed grew to life and beauty, was certainly Græco-Roman.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxi. 39, xxii. 3 ; Phil. iii. 5, 6 ; Gal. i. 17 ; Acts xxvi. 4, 5.

## SOURCES.

### (b) JEWISH INFLUENCES, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

No one who has studied St. Paul's career, as recorded in the Acts and in his Epistles, can doubt the enormous influence which Judaism exerted upon him. Sabatier, who denies Græco-Roman influence, says: 'It is not the citizen of Tarsus, but the Pharisee of Jerusalem, that accounts for the Apostle of the Gentiles.'<sup>1</sup> No Jew in history valued his position as a Jew more than St. Paul. To the multitude in Jerusalem he said: 'I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers.'<sup>2</sup> He says on another occasion: 'My manner of life from my youth up, which was from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews . . . how that, after the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.'<sup>3</sup> In his Epistles, he gives the same testimony: 'Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.'<sup>4</sup> To the Philip-  
pians he writes: 'Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier: *Apostle Paul*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxvi. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 22.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.'<sup>1</sup> These passages show that St. Paul was proud of his Judaism, and recognised all that he owed to it, in spite of his opposition to the false interpretation placed upon 'the Law' by the sect to which he belonged. Nothing diminished his sense of the privilege he enjoyed as one of the people to whom were entrusted 'the oracles of God.' His epistles show that he had deeply studied the Old Testament, a right interpretation of which could make the student 'wise unto salvation.' The wonderful array of texts he marshals from the Old Testament numbers more than a hundred and eighty. Every part of it, the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, was evidently familiar to him. The importance of what he calls 'the Holy Scriptures'<sup>2</sup> is manifest in his ethical teaching. They brought him into close contact with the ethical monotheism of later Judaism. He had learnt that the God worshipped by Israel was 'exalted in righteousness.' The lofty morality of the prophets, the important place given to conscience in the religion they taught, the devoutness of the Psalms, were all impressed upon him. These are not mere conjectures, they appear constantly in his writings. It may be urged that St. Paul was

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

## SOURCES.

a Pharisee, and that the sect of the Pharisees stands condemned in the Gospels, as exhibiting a religion devoid of moral worth. Yet Nicodemus and Gamaliel were both Pharisees, and shine out as striking examples of exceptions to the general hypocrisy of the sect. We cannot suppose that a man, so sincere and upright as Saul of Tarsus, ever descended to the moral baseness so severely rebuked by our Lord.

### (c.) LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS.

It has been asserted that St. Paul knew little of the life and teaching of Jesus. It is admitted that he was fully instructed regarding His crucifixion, and His resurrection; but it is denied that he knew much about the historical life of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels. It is true that St. Paul does not present us with many parallels with the Gospels, and seldom quotes words used by our Lord. But it must be remembered that St. Paul's Epistles were written to converts, who had already been instructed in the main facts of the Christian Gospel, and whose knowledge of these facts might be assumed. When he appeals to them to remember 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ,' they must have known the general outline of our Lord's ministry. Further, a close study of the

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Epistles proves that St. Paul, and his converts, had a considerable knowledge of the historical Christ. If St. Paul does not often quote the words of his Master, yet he lived Christ, and strove to imitate Him. It is unthinkable that he should have been ignorant of the life and teaching of the One whom he made the great example of his life. Dr. Knowling has carefully gathered up details from the Epistles, which prove an extensive acquaintance with the character and teaching of our Lord. It is impossible to give all the particular points dwelt upon by Dr. Knowling. It must suffice to illustrate briefly St. Paul's indebtedness, as an ethical teacher, to the moral precepts and example of our Lord.

(1) In his address at Miletus to the Ephesian elders, St. Paul says: 'Ye ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'<sup>1</sup>

(2) In his teaching on marriage and divorce (1 Cor. vii.) he distinguishes between a commandment (ἐπιταγή) of Christ, and a judgment (γνώμη) of his own. 'Unto the married I give charge, yet not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband (but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 35.

## SOURCES.

husband), and that the husband leave not his wife.'<sup>1</sup> The allusion to our Lord's words regarding divorce is unmistakable.

(3) Respecting the provision for the ministry, St. Paul says: 'Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.'<sup>2</sup>

(4) In his statement about the Lord's Supper, St. Paul quotes the words used by our Lord on the night when He was betrayed.<sup>3</sup>

(5) In his Epistle to Timothy he speaks of 'wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus.'<sup>4</sup>

(6) In other passages there is a striking parallelism between the words of St. Paul and the words of Christ.

Rom. xii. 14. Bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not.

Matt. v. 44. Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you.

Rom. xiii. 7. Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due.

Matt. xxii. 21. Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

Rom. xiii. 9. And if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in the word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt. xxii. 39. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The most important passages, which bring out

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 14. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 23. <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

the dependence of St. Paul for his ethical teaching upon Christ, refer to Him as an example. To the Corinthians he says: 'Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.'<sup>1</sup> To the Philippians he writes: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'<sup>2</sup> He prays that the Colossians may 'walk worthily of the Lord.'<sup>3</sup> He commends the Thessalonians, because they were imitators both of him and of Christ.<sup>4</sup> These passages indicate that before the eyes of St. Paul there was an objective and historical model, to which he was ever turning. When he speaks of Him that 'knew no sin,'<sup>5</sup> when he reminds his readers that Christ 'pleased not himself,'<sup>6</sup> can we possibly doubt the store of knowledge regarding our Lord which St. Paul had gathered up and regarded as a most precious possession? It was from this store that he drew largely in his ethical teaching.

### (d) THE WORKING OF ST. PAUL'S OWN MIND ON THE MORALLY FRUITFUL IDEA OF THE BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST.

Hellenism, Hebraism, the life and example of Jesus—all these, like the entwined strands of a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 10.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. i. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xv. 3.



## SOURCES.

rope, are to be found in St. Paul's ethical teaching. But there is still much more which cannot be traced to this threefold source. When Prof. Huxley declares that 'Christianity inherited a good deal from Paganism and Judaism, and that, if the Stoics and the Jews revoked their bequest, the moral property of Christianity would realise very little,'<sup>1</sup> he ignores the root of all New Testament morality—the believer's union with Christ, and the rich fruit which has been manifest in the moral ideas of the race, in consequence of that union.

Huxley, and others like him, write as though the whole question of the moral superiority of Christianity can be determined by a table of parallel columns. In one column, the chief tenets of Judaism are entered ; in the second, those of the Stoics ; in the third, those of the New Testament. The tenets common to the third, and to each of the others, are struck out, and what is left is the measure of morality's debt to the New Testament. It is very simple, but very misleading. Though, as Bishop Lightfoot says : 'The Gospel is capable of doctrinal exposition ; though it is eminently fertile in moral results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system, nor an ethical code, but a

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Morals*, reprinted in *Essays, Ethical and Political*.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Person and a Life.'<sup>1</sup> And it is the omission of this vital fact that makes all such comparisons as those referred to absolutely worthless and vain. Christianity stands apart from and above all other systems of religion and philosophy, not by the excellence of its moral precepts, great as it is, but by the new fellowship with Christ which it proclaims. Such certainly was the Gospel, as it was apprehended by St. Paul.

When we have stated the various outside influences which affected St. Paul's ethical teaching, there yet remains much that is the outcome of his own wonderful personality. Ramsay, who has devoted most of his life to the study of St. Paul, speaks of him as a man of transcendent genius, standing in line with the greatest thinkers of the world. We naturally expect to find in the teaching of so great a man ideas worthy of his personality. Nor do we seek in vain. In the foreground of the Pauline Ethics is the revelation of a new life of fellowship with Christ. He used no extravagant language when he said : ' It is no longer I that live, it is Christ that liveth in me.' He had the mind of Christ, and Christian morality was the application of that mind to the necessities of the age in which he lived.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to first edition of *Epistle to Philippians*.

## SOURCES.

As Sabatier well says : ‘ St. Paul and the other Apostles did not think of the teaching of Jesus as a collection of sayings, an external law, or written letter, to be constantly quoted. Christ was to them an immanent and fertile principle, producing new fruit at each new season.’<sup>1</sup> We do not expect that St. Paul will present us with a complete ethic, to meet all the contingencies of life ; but he does reveal the ‘ spiritual ’ principle, working in himself, and in every one who enters into the new fellowship. ‘ The imitation of Christ ’ is the great watchword of the Christian ethic, but the phrase needs explanation. It does not mean a servile following of Christ—an exact reproduction of His life. Imitation in that sense is impossible. Social conditions are entirely different to-day from what they were in our Lord’s time. The moral task of the Christian to-day is, ‘ Not to copy after Him, but to let His life take form in us, to receive His spirit, and to make it effective.’<sup>2</sup> This St. Paul understood. He taught that in Christ we find our example ; in Christ, our new life. He Himself gives the life which He reveals and demands. That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith ; it is in the answer to that prayer that we find the root of all true Christian morality.

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier’s *Apostle Paul*, p. 81.    <sup>2</sup> Smyth’s *Christian Ethics*, p. 78.

# ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

## II. DOCUMENTS.

Having shown the sources from which St. Paul derived his ethical teaching, we have now to consider the documents in which it is contained.

The principal documents are the Acts of the Apostles and the thirteen Epistles alleged to be written by him, included in the Canon of the New Testament. If it is decided that these Epistles are genuine, we are in possession of evidence regarding Christianity commencing in or about the year 51 A.D. ; that is, little more than twenty years after the Crucifixion. At that date many persons were living who had known the Historic Christ, and were in a position to correct any mis-statements. As the Epistles were written by a man of genius and integrity, not likely to be misled as to his facts, we may be tolerably certain that he does not present a false interpretation of those facts. The consciousness of the importance of the Epistles, as evidences for the truth of the Gospel, has led to concentrated attacks upon them, with the object of minimising their evidential value. After more than seventy years of close criticism by thoroughly competent scholars, the genuineness of most of the Epistles has been established. The following is a brief statement of the present attitude of the best-known critics :

## SOURCES.

*Harnack* accepts all the Pauline Epistles except Ephesians and the Pastorals, but thinks that much may be said in favour of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

*Jülicher* and *Deissmann* agree with *Harnack*.

*Clemen* accepts the same nine Epistles.

*Wrede* of Breslau accepts eight.

*Weinel* accepts six, but acknowledges that most critics add two more, Colossians and Philemon.

The great conservative critics, such as *Zahn* and *B. Weiss*, are positive that at least ten should be accepted. Thus we find that the number of Epistles admitted to be Pauline is more than double the number accepted by the Tübingen school in 1845. Among Continental scholars there is practically a unanimity in rejecting the Pastorals as legitimate sources for a knowledge of St. Paul's teaching. The defence of these Epistles has been very ably carried out by *Dr. Knowling* in his valuable book on *The Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*. He points out that certain admissions are now made:

- (1) They are based upon genuine Pauline letters or fragments.
- (2) Many of the phrases, even in the parts alleged to be of later date, are Pauline in style.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

- (3) The ecclesiastical organization, and the heresies opposed, are not necessarily later than St. Paul's time.<sup>1</sup>

These are important admissions, and greatly modify the attack upon the Pastoral Epistles. The greatest difficulty arises from the impossibility of fitting the historical statements into the period covered by the Acts. Bartlet, in his work *The Apostolic Age*, attempts to do this, and supposes that St. Paul left Titus in Crete, when his ship was at Fair Havens ; and that he wrote the Epistle soon after he reached Rome, in reply to questions addressed to him by Titus. He supposes that when St. Paul visited Miletus, on the voyage to Jerusalem, he left Trophimus there, and wrote 1 Timothy soon after, when on board ship ; 2 Timothy being written shortly before his death. He rejects the tradition of a second imprisonment. This theory is not satisfactory. There is no proof that Titus was with St. Paul on his voyage to Rome, and Trophimus was with St. Paul at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The rejection of a second imprisonment is opposed to the general tradition of the early Church, and contradicts the express testimony of Clement of Rome, who says that St. Paul went to the boundary of the West. It is also opposed to the testimony

<sup>1</sup> *Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxi. 29.

## SOURCES.

of the Muratorian fragment, which states that St. Paul went to Spain. It is also in conflict with St. Paul's confident expectation of a speedy release, expressed in Phil. ii. 24 and Philem. 22. If the release of St. Paul is admitted, the historical difficulties of the Pastorals disappear, for the events referred to would belong to a period not covered by the Acts.

The other objections to the Pastorals are as follows : Harnack, while admitting Pauline fragments, points to passages which he considers to be interpolations, inserted about A.D. 100, and adds that these were worked over by a redactor about A.D. 150 in the interests of ecclesiastical order. He is inclined to favour the opinion of a release after the captivity mentioned in Acts, because the policy of Rome before A.D. 64 would not be adverse to Christianity. Harnack's theory of interpolations is too intricate to be reliable, and the same may be said of other writers who adopt a composite theory. Another objection is, that Marcion excludes the Pastorals from his canon. But there were good reasons for the exclusion. He held definite doctrinal views, which led him to mutilate St. Luke's Gospel and reject the other three. In the Pastorals, the value set on the Old Testament (2 Tim. iii. 16) ; the statement about the Incarna-

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

tion (1 Tim. ii. 5) ; and the general attitude of the Epistles against a false spiritualism, would all be distasteful to Marcion.<sup>1</sup> Another objection is, that the language of the Pastorals is not that used by St. Paul in his other Epistles ; but the difference of language has been greatly exaggerated. It is true that there are many *ἄπαξ λεγόμενα* in the Pastorals ; but there are also many in each group of St. Paul's letters. His residence in Rome would account for the Latinisms found in the later Epistles, and it is always to be expected that a new environment will lead to new modes of expression. The objections urged against the portions of the Epistles dealing with heresies are gradually being withdrawn, as it is becoming clear that the errors opposed are mainly Jewish, the false teachers being teachers of 'the law' ; 'the endless genealogies,'<sup>2</sup> 'old wives' fables,'<sup>3</sup> 'genealogies and fighting about the law,'<sup>4</sup> are an accurate summary of *The Book of Philo concerning Biblical Antiquities*, known as the Pseudo-Philo, which has lately been republished ; and of the Book of Jubilees, which magnifies the patriarchs by giving legendary pedigrees to them, the names and numbers being entirely fanciful. In opposition to the criticism

<sup>1</sup> See Pullan's *New Testament*, section on the Pastoral Epistles.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. i. 4.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 7.      <sup>4</sup> Titus iii. 9.



## SOURCES.

of the Pastorals, much may be said for their genuineness.

The external evidence is excellent, both 1 and 2 Timothy being quoted by Polycarp (A.D. 110).

The internal evidence is also strongly in favour of a Pauline origin. The Pastorals are evidently the writings of one who felt his responsibility for men whom he had placed in high office in the Church, and with whom he sympathised in their difficulties. The known relations in which St. Paul stood to Timothy and Titus exactly suit the relations of the writer of these letters to the recipients. They manifest a tender affection in the writer for his children in the faith. They are the kind of personal letters we should expect St. Paul to write, under the special circumstances indicated in the contents.

It is not possible in a short treatise to give in detail all the internal evidence in favour of Pauline authorship; a full account is given in Dr. Knowling's *Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*.<sup>1</sup> A careful study of the evidence, both external and internal, will satisfy most minds that no apology is needed for admitting the Pastorals as genuine writings of the great Apostle. We therefore asso-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 129-147.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

ciate them with the other ten canonical epistles, as sources of St. Paul's ethical teaching.

Before passing from the sources to the matter of St. Paul's ethical teaching, it is worthy of notice that the various influences which operated in St. Paul made him a fitting vehicle for the teaching of Christianity to the world, and enabled him to do a work which could not have been done by the older disciples, so far as we can judge of their capacity from their speeches, writings, and actions known to us. His Hellenic training made him quick to recognise the liberal spirit of the Judaism of the Diaspora, compared with the spirit which prevailed in Palestine. This liberal spirit naturally led to a more attentive hearing of the Gospel message and to a more tolerant attitude towards the missionaries of the new faith. But there were, as we discover from the Acts, among the Jews of the Diaspora, men who retained all the bigotry and narrowness of orthodox Judaism; and when the work of St. Paul was hindered by the opposition of the extremists, instead of giving way, as St. Peter did at Antioch, St. Paul saw at once that if Christianity was to be anything better than a sect of Judaism he must appeal at once to the Gentile world. He had not been wrong in offering salvation through Christ to the Jew first, but when the

## SOURCES.

Jew rejected the offer, he definitely turned his face towards the Gentiles. This was no sudden step. The Epistle to the Romans shows how deeply the Apostle felt the pang of turning his back upon his compatriots, and how he looked forward to the ingathering of the Gentiles as a stage in the conversion of the Jews.

There was much in Hellenic culture which made it a promising field for the Gospel. Although religion was at first largely ceremonial, yet the teaching of the philosophers had purged away much of the superstition and immorality which stood for religion in the popular mind. The best culture was reaching out towards a pure and lofty morality. Stoic philosophy was obtaining a firm hold on the Græco-Roman world. Religious mysteries, combined with the idea of moral purity, could not effect the regeneration of man ; but they prepared the way for the Gospel by showing that the pure soul alone could hold communion with the gods.

## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

IT is often urged that St. Paul's ethical teaching is fragmentary, and does not seem to spring from any definite system. The answer is, that the extant writings of St. Paul are all Epistles or letters, written in response 'to some definite impulse in the diversified experience of the young Christian churches,'<sup>1</sup> or were written to personal friends on account of particular circumstances. There is no trace in his writings that St. Paul thought of them as literature or of the place they would occupy in universal history. 'No one,' says Deissmann, 'will hesitate to grant that the letter to Philemon has the character of a letter. It must be to a large extent a mere doctrinal want of taste that could make any one describe this gem, the preservation of which we owe to some fortunate accident, as an essay, say, "on the attitude of Christianity to slavery." It is rather a letter

<sup>1</sup> Deissmann's *Bible Studies*, p. 44.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

full of a charming, unconscious naïveté, full of kindly human nature.' Probably Deissmann goes too far in regarding all St. Paul's writings as letters, intended to serve a merely temporary purpose. The Epistle to the Romans, for example, is a carefully prepared doctrinal treatise, written to the Church in the Imperial City, and setting forth the faith as St. Paul taught it. The question discussed by Deissmann is one of deep interest, but is beyond the scope of a treatise. It is sufficient to point to the fact that the elements, which are purely local and temporary in St. Paul's writings, are overshadowed by those elements which are universal and abiding. That the early Church recognised their value is proved by their admission into the Canon of Scripture from the earliest date of its formation, and from the practice of reading them, as Scriptures, in the services of the Church.

Even when St. Paul treats of local matters, he lays down principles of conduct which have served as a guidance to every subsequent generation of Christians. It will be seen, moreover, that it is possible to gather together a considerable volume of ethical teaching from the 'fragments' of his teaching: teaching preserved to us, not merely by the instinct of the early Christian Church, but also, we believe, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

In the use of the material provided in St. Paul's Epistles, each age must apply the principles of conduct he laid down to its needs, keeping in mind the wide differences of social and religious life which result from the lapse of time. It would not be wise, for example, to bind the hands of the Church to-day by St. Paul's regulations concerning the position of women in Christian assemblies. At that time the position of women was entirely different from what it is to-day. Also different countries have their different customs. In Corea it is regarded as 'indecent' for a man to take off his hat in public, hence men always keep on their hats in church. In Japan, women never cover their heads, hence their heads are also uncovered in church. The Apostle's own disregard of the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, regarding the eating of meats offered to idols, should warn us not to confuse injunctions which were temporary with those that have lasting value. It further follows from the epistolary character of St. Paul's writings that he does not treat of some subjects which Christian ethics must treat of to-day, but concerning which he is silent. In spite of the inevitable fragmentariness, and admitting that the moral utterances of the Apostle 'do not spring from any consciously developed system of moral

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

ideas,<sup>1</sup> it is still possible to speak of St. Paul's ethical teaching as a whole, and to lay down two or three of its leading characteristics.

### (a) ITS EMPHASIS ON THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

It has already been remarked that Professor Huxley states that Christianity inherited a great deal of its teaching from Paganism and Judaism, and that if the Stoics and Jews revoked their bequests, the moral property of Christianity would be very small. McGiffert also states that there is comparatively little difference between the ethical principles of the Christians, and the principles of the best men in the pagan world.<sup>2</sup> It is strange that both these writers should have failed to recognise the entirely new element which Christianity brought into the moral life of the world. The pagan philosophers held lofty views regarding virtue, and subsequent ages have been eager to honour them for their services to morality; but Christianity, when it laid emphasis on the virtues of humility, patience, forbearance, pity, and kindness, struck a note which was entirely new to the ears of men.<sup>3</sup> To the fierce, hard, Roman world

<sup>1</sup> T. B. Strong's *Christian Ethics*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> McGiffert's *Apostolic Age*, p. 506.

<sup>3</sup> ὁ ἀπειδὼν τῇ δαίᾳ διοικήσει ἔστω ταπεινός, ἔστω δοῦλος, λυπείσθω, φθονεῖτω, ἡλειεῖτω. Epictetus, *Diss.* iii. 24, 43. With the Stoics ἔλεος was reckoned as a defect or vice.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

it proclaimed: 'Let all bitterness, and anger, and clamour, and railing be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you.'<sup>1</sup>

The ancient world could value kindness among friends, but it had no element of mercy for enemies. Christianity, as interpreted by St. Paul, taught: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.'<sup>2</sup> Nothing illustrates more clearly the contrast between pagan and Christian ethics than the prominence given in the latter to such virtues as humility and forgiveness. In St. Paul's list of virtues, they rank as among the highest; to pagan philosophers, they were of little or no account. The significance of this new element in morals has been recognised by few writers more clearly than by Mr. Lecky. He says: 'In antiquity the virtues which were most admired were almost exclusively those that were masculine. Courage, self-assertion, magnanimity, and above all, patriotism, were the leading features of the ideal type; and chastity, modesty, and charity, the gentler and domestic virtues, were undervalued.'<sup>3</sup> But it is these latter that the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 36.



## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

exalts and honours. Christianity has practically reversed the order of pre-eminence among the virtues, it has exalted humility and meekness above courage, and even patriotism. Nevertheless we must avoid the error of supposing that the New Testament exalts one type of virtue at the expense of another. What is really done is to make human character complete. It does not dethrone courage.

St. Paul himself was the bravest of the brave : no danger could daunt him. In the riot at Ephesus, his friends had difficulty in restraining him from rushing into the amphitheatre to face a frantic mob ; but with his courage was associated the tenderness and meekness which befitted the bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

### (b) ITS BREADTH.

No Jew in history was more profoundly patriotic than St. Paul ; his heart's desire, and supplication to God, was for the salvation of his nation.<sup>1</sup> He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had associated himself with the strictest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee. It had been his earnest endeavour to find peace through 'the Law,' the cherished possession of his people. Its

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 1.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

convicting power had been fully realised: 'I had not known lust (*ἐπιθυμία*) except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet.'<sup>1</sup> The Law was to him the revealer of sin. But he had found not only its power, but its weakness. The most complete obedience to its precepts could not relieve his soul from the burden of sin, or give him peace with God. A wonderful array of texts from the Old Testament shows how he had searched the Scriptures in order to find in them a pathway to salvation, and yet he had searched in vain. He had studied the fall of man, the lives of Abraham and the other patriarchs. He had read the Prophets and the Psalms, and had learnt that the problems of life could not be solved by the interpretations of Pharisaism. While never yielding his patriotism, he had come to the conclusion that Judaism could not be the permanent religion of God's children, nor the Old Testament the final revelation of God's will. When at last he found in Christ the solution of all his difficulties, he was ready to carry the good tidings of salvation, which had penetrated his own soul, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. The particularism of the Pharisees was swept away and disappeared in the universalism of Christianity, and the voices of the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 7.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Prophets sounded in his ears as proclaiming the Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as heralding the glory of his own people Israel.

Henceforward 'universalism' becomes a characteristic in St. Paul's ethics. He taught that the appeal of Christianity was to no exclusive race, but to all men. 'Admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ'—the emphatic reiteration of 'every man' being a designed protest against any narrowing of the Gospel message. In this protest we see, not only opposition to Pharisaic particularism, but also to the intellectual exclusiveness of heathen philosophy. Heathen philosophy had set forth two standards of conduct: a high one for the rich and well-born; a lower, for the poor, who had no leisure for study or meditation. The ethical teaching of St. Paul knows no distinction; never once, in his loftiest flights of moral appeal, does it seem to occur to him that he is mocking the slave and the outcast with visions of the unattainable. Cicero, in his *De Officiis*, drew a distinction between the ideal morality of the wise man and the morality of the common people.<sup>1</sup> The same temper meets us in Philo. 'His Gospel,' says Jowett, 'is not that of

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt's *History of Christian Ethics*, p. 16.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

humanity, but of philosophy and asceticism.'<sup>1</sup> 'The temper of Stoicism,' says Dr. Lightfoot, 'was essentially aristocratic and exclusive in religion, as it was in politics. While professing the law of comprehension, it was practically the narrowest of all the philosophies.'<sup>2</sup> No such limitations are found in St. Paul's ethics. He speaks to all, because he has a message for all. His whole conception of morals moves inwardly. Instead of the 'provincial edicts' with which pre-Christian morality was so largely concerned, we have now 'imperial laws' which are meant to govern the whole moral universe.<sup>3</sup> Even when St. Paul treats of questions which seem to us trivial, there is nothing trivial in his treatment of them. His large-mindedness, his moral sanity, his resolute appeal to the loftiest Christian principles, bring even the matter discussed by him in 1 Corinthians to the level of object-lessons for all time in the delicate task of adjusting the rival claims of Christian liberty and expediency.

### (c) ITS SYMMETRY AND BALANCE.

A writer in the *Spectator* says: 'Since all ethics are a delicate equipoise, it is possible to

<sup>1</sup> Essay, *St. Paul and Philo*, Epistles to Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans, vol. i., p. 429.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle to Philippians*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> See Prof. Knight's *Christian Ethics*, p. 51.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

incline the balance too far, and, in overdoing a virtue, to make it first cousin to vice.'<sup>1</sup> Aristotle had seen this clearly, and regarded virtue as a mean between two extremes. Thrift is good, but how often it degenerates into miserliness. Tenderness is a Christian virtue, but often becomes culpable weakness. Veracity is essential in the Christian character, but how often it is used to hurt the feelings of others, because not accompanied by love. In St. Paul's teaching we find tenderness without weakness, strength without harshness, meekness without cowardice, speaking the truth, but in love. In the old conflict between culture and restraint, between Greek and Hebrew ideals, St. Paul holds the balance even. As a Hebrew, he could not fail to see the value of self-restraint, and even of asceticism ; but he is no preacher of asceticism, as having value in itself. He says, 'I buffet my body, and bring it into subjection,'<sup>2</sup> but it was with a distinct purpose, for he adds, 'Lest after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.'

Self-renunciation is practised as a means for self-development. What a wonderful ideal is set before the Philippians in the words, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable,

<sup>1</sup> July 23rd, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.'<sup>1</sup>

### (d) ITS CENTRE IN CHRIST.

St. Paul's ethics owes its greatest distinction to the person in whom it centres. To those to whom Christ is only a moral ideal, 'a brilliant and primitive illustration of the religion which bears His name,' a great part of St. Paul's teaching must be unintelligible. The key to all that the Apostle taught is to be found in his favourite expression, 'in Christ.' He had learnt that by faith in Christ the moral consciousness is brought under the power of a personal example. The life 'in Christ' was to St. Paul, a life controlled by Christ. A life not subject to merely impersonal laws, but responding to a spiritual principle; a life which, though hidden in the soul, yet manifested itself in the restraint of all tendencies towards sinful acts. To the Colossians he writes: 'Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Mortify therefore your members, which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.' The

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 8.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

old life lived 'in the flesh' had passed away ; the new life in Christ was to be marked by the destruction of all those evil practices, which would hinder its development. Thus in St. Paul's teaching Christ is the great inspiring force which moulds the human character. He was to St. Paul the great Ideal by following which men could attain to the likeness of God ; and what He was to St. Paul, he still is in the world. 'It was reserved,' says Lecky, 'for Christianity to present to the world an ideal Character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, conditions. Has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of morality.'<sup>1</sup>

That Christ remained the norm of the Christian life, in the history of the Church, is thus stated by Bishop Lightfoot : 'One might have thought it impossible to study with common attention the

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. 8.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

records of the Apostles and martyrs of the first ages, or of the saints and heroes of the later Church, without seeing that the consciousness of personal union with Him (Christ), the belief in His abiding Presence was the mainspring of their actions, and the fountain of all their strength. This is not a preconceived theory of what should have happened, but a bare statement of what stands recorded on the pages of history. In all ages, and under all circumstances, the Christian life has ever radiated from this central fire. Whether we take St. Paul or St. Peter, St. Francis d'Assisi or John Wesley, whether Athanasius or Augustine, Anselm or Luther, whether Boniface or St. Francis Xavier, here has been the impulse of their activity and the secret of their moral power.<sup>1</sup> This important truth still needs restatement, because there is still an endeavour to minimise the value of the spiritual principle introduced into the world by Christianity, and to magnify the results attained by heathen philosophers, as though nothing could improve their moral scheme.

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle to Philippians*, pp. 324-5.



## CHAPTER III.

### ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY.

WE do not expect to find in St. Paul's writings a connected system of Psychology, any more than we expect to find a definite system of ethics. The character of the Pauline literature is not such as would be likely to include scientific discussions ; but yet we can gather that he had received some training in the Jewish schools regarding the nature of man.

The basis of his psychology is found in the account of the creation of man, described in Gen. ii. 7 : ' And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,' the Hebrew word for soul (נֶפֶשׁ) is translated in the LXX., *ψυχή*. Thus man is partly earthy (*χοϊκός*) and partly sentient ; the two elements constituting his personality. It is noticeable that in the Hebrew account of man's creation in Gen. ii., nothing is said about the spiritual part of man, but we cannot deduce from this that the

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Hebrews did not recognise that man was possessed of a spiritual nature, for that is implied in the Creation narrative in Gen. i., in which man is stated to have been created in the image of God. That there was no very clear idea regarding man's nature may be gathered from the words of Ecclesiastes regarding men and beasts, 'they have all one breath (spirit),'<sup>1</sup> 'Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward; and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?'<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty thus shown gave rise to different theories in the various schools of Jewish thought, some holding a bipartite, and some a tripartite nature in man.

Discussion on such divisions ignores the main idea of the Jews that the material part of man, and the spiritual part, constitute the *ψυχή* (living soul). This 'soul' is dissolved by death. The material body returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.<sup>3</sup> The soul is not regarded as a separate substance, which is joined to the body at birth, but is matter animated by God's spirit. When Greek philosophy influenced Jewish thought, we find the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of souls expressed, as in the Book of Wisdom;<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. iii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles. xii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Wisdom vii. 19, 20.

## ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY.

it is thought that there is a reference to this doctrine in the words addressed by the disciples to Jesus concerning a man who was born blind : ' Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind ? ' <sup>1</sup> But this doctrine does not appear in St. Paul's psychology. Man is considered by him to be a unity of matter and spirit, thence, in the doctrine of the resurrection, the body rises ; but it is no longer a natural (*ψυχικόν*) body, it has undergone a change, which makes it spiritual (*πνευματικόν*). <sup>2</sup> The spiritual body being a body conformed to that of the Risen Christ. The natural body was an inheritance from Adam, the spiritual body is a result of union with Christ, the Second Adam.

Two passages in St. Paul's writings suggest that he held a threefold division in human nature. The first is, 1 Thess. v. 23, where spirit, soul, and body are mentioned. The body : being the temporary casket, 'the earthly house of our tabernacle.' <sup>3</sup> The soul : expressing man as endowed with affections, passions, reason, and moral sense, but considered apart from his relation to God. The spirit : expressing the principle of the higher life derived from a definite relation to God, realised through union with Christ.

<sup>1</sup> John ix. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 44, 46.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

The other passage is Phil. i. 27, in which there is the same distinction between soul and spirit. But, in general, St. Paul speaks of man's personality as 'flesh' and 'spirit.'

The 'flesh' is not regarded as essentially evil, for the Apostle says, 'The life which I now live *in the flesh*, I live in faith.'<sup>1</sup> In many passages<sup>2</sup> 'flesh' is opposed to 'spirit.' In this opposition the flesh is regarded as the seat of sin. 'The mind (*φρόνημα*) of the flesh is death; the mind of the spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.'<sup>3</sup> Also the 'works' of the flesh are contrasted with the 'fruit' of the spirit.<sup>4</sup> Although the flesh is usually the element in man's nature which is affected by sin, yet St. Paul considers that the spirit may also be defiled.<sup>5</sup> The opposition between flesh and spirit is therefore not one which follows psychological lines, but rather indicates religious ideas. The flesh stands for the lower nature of man, fallen through sin; and the spirit for the higher nature to which man rises when he is redeemed, regenerated, and sanctified by union with the Spirit of Christ. Christ in man brings about the true glory to which humanity can attain; for, according to St. Paul, Christ adds to human

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> No less than twenty-three.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 6, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. v. 19.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.

## ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY.

nature a new spiritual element. He is the starting-point of a new humanity. By virtue of his union with Him, man becomes 'a new creature.'<sup>1</sup> He is renewed in the spirit of his mind. He puts on the new man, 'which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, regenerated man is capable of a higher moral life than can be lived by the 'natural' man. Although this higher life is potentially divine, yet it is subject to infirmity. It is still 'a body of death.'<sup>3</sup> 'The corruptible body presseth down the soul,'<sup>4</sup> and hinders its full development. St. Paul felt the pressure in himself, but looked forward to deliverance from the body of death, and to the complete triumph of his spiritual nature. His idea is a progressive advance from a lower stage to a higher: 'As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'<sup>5</sup>

Never, even in the closing years of a life of complete surrender to Christ, was the great Apostle satisfied with the progress he had attained. In writing to the Philippians from Rome, he speaks of his constant struggle towards the supremacy of his higher nature. 'Not,' he says, 'that I have

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Wisdom ix. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 46.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

already obtained, or am already made perfect ; but I press on if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.'<sup>1</sup>

Having considered the most important psychological terms used by St. Paul, body, soul, and spirit, we can now consider other terms that require explanation. The word 'heart' (καρδία) continually meets us in the Pauline writings,<sup>2</sup> and is used to express the seat of 'thought' as well as of 'feeling'; it covers the intellectual, emotional, and volitional functions of the human life, but never stands for the whole nature of man.<sup>3</sup>

Another psychological word used by St. Paul is νοῦς. He speaks of the mind (νοῦς) of Christ,<sup>4</sup> and adds, 'we have the mind of Christ.' It is clear that he means 'intellectual activity' in this passage. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>5</sup> he contrasts prayer and praise which is ecstatic, with that which is intelligent. 'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding (νοῦς) is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.'

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty-two times.

<sup>3</sup> See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, article on 'Psychology.'

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15.

## ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY.

The only other psychological term which requires explanation is 'Conscience' (*συνείδησις*). It is invariably used by St. Paul for the Kantian 'Practical Reason,' man's moral consciousness. He speaks of the conscience of the heathen, as a law operating in their lives, and judging their actions.<sup>1</sup> In himself conscience was always active; he appealed to its witness when he wrote regarding his love for his own people.<sup>2</sup> In his defence before Felix he says, 'I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man always.'<sup>3</sup> Even before his conversion, he had followed the dictates of conscience. 'Brethren,' he says to the Sanhedrim, 'I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day.' When he recognised any course of conduct as right, he followed it instinctively. The convictions on which his conscience depended were not always right, and led him to persecute the Church; but when, by faith in Christ, his conscience was brought under the power of a personal example, then it was obeyed, not as an impersonal law, but as a new power given by Christ to direct his life.

In his ethical teaching he requires men to follow conscience, even when it was weak and ill-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxiv. 16.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

instructed,<sup>1</sup> and speaks of the danger to the whole moral and spiritual life when the conscience becomes insensitive or defiled.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that a Christian conscience was to St. Paul a known and luminous power, of a high and spiritual order. The importance he attached to it is an instance of the Stoic teaching which, Ramsay thinks, he received at the University of Tarsus.

The distinction between the moral functions of personality, as exhibited in conscience, and the intellectual functions is the nearest approach we have in St. Paul's writings to the modern science of psychology.

Before passing from the Pauline psychology, a few remarks may be made upon the distinction St. Paul makes between his true self and the self of sin. Every man is conscious that at times his actions fall below his usual standard of conduct. He may be carried away by strong feelings, which overpower the resistance of his judgment. To a man with strong religious yearnings, lapses into sin cause intense distress, and he constantly struggles to be delivered from the bondage of his lower nature. St. Paul tells us that when he would do good, evil was present with him ; and he ascribes

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 10, 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 2 ; Titus i. 15.



## ST. PAUL'S PSYCHOLOGY.

the evil to indwelling sin. Hence he is conscious of a higher self, his true self (*αὐτὸς ἐγὼ*); and a lower self, a self of sin. Again, he appears to identify himself with the lower self when he says, 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.' In this passage 'I' refers to the lower self, the Pauline 'flesh'; while the new life is the Christ-life in him. His true 'self' was therefore the 'self' created and controlled by Christ. The old 'self' which was carnal, and not spiritual, although subdued, and kept under control, was not slain, and continued to exert an influence over his actions. The moral struggle he describes as follows :—'For that which I do (*κατεργάζομαι*), I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise (*πράσσω*); but what I hate, that I do (*ποιέω*).'<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that preceding his account of the struggle, there is a strong sense of the unworthiness of any action which is prompted by the flesh (the self of sin), and a fuller determination to persevere in the higher life, which is 'in Christ.' He is conscious of being impelled in two different directions. His higher self, the inner man, the *αὐτὸς ἐγὼ* impels him towards the good; the lower self, the fleshly nature, draws him towards the evil. He describes both the struggle

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 23.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

and the victory : 'O wretched man that I am !  
Who shall deliver me out of the body of this  
death ? I thank God through JESUS CHRIST our  
Lord.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 25.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PAGAN MORALITY.

**I**T is sometimes charged against Christian teachers that they under-estimate the moral ideas attained by the heathen, in the desire to base morality upon a distinctly religious foundation ; and there is some ground for the charge, for, by many Christian teachers, it is overlooked that long before Christianity was taught, and in places where Jewish influences had little weight, a lofty morality was evolved from the meditations of some of the noblest thinkers of the human race. In the last century the services rendered by these teachers were regarded by some philosophers as superior in moral value to the teaching of Christianity, and an attempt was made to formulate a system of education which excluded all that the world had learnt from the teachers of Christ and His Apostles. There is a well-known passage in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* in which he describes the education he received from his father. It was

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

that of a well-trained pagan. James Mill, his son tells us, had framed his life on pagan ideals. In his personal qualities, the Stoic predominated; in his moral standard he was Epicurean, although scarcely any believer in 'pleasure.' John Stuart Mill adds: 'My father's convictions were wholly dissevered from religion,' and 'were very much of the character of those of the Greek philosophers . . . my father's moral inculcations were at all times mainly those of the "Socratici viri"; justice, temperance, veracity, perseverance, readiness to encounter pain, and especially labour, regard for the public good, estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their intrinsic usefulness, a life of exertion in contradiction to one of self-indulgent sloth.'<sup>1</sup> This is all pure paganism, but it cannot be denied that it has moral worth. The question is in what respect was the Christian ethic superior to the pagan?

Before considering St. Paul's teaching in relation to the morality of the heathen world before his time, it may be well to consider the progress which had been made through the moral reflection of the great Greek teachers. There was no abrupt commencement of ethical speculation.<sup>2</sup> In early times, Homer held the place in Greek

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 46-48.    <sup>2</sup> Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*, p. 12.

## PAGAN MORALITY.

literature which the Scripture held among the Jews ; but in Homer there is no blame attached to men for actions which were regarded as defective. If a man acted wrongly, he was supposed to be temporarily deranged, or under the malign influence of some offended God ; yet in sketching his characters Homer gave examples of human excellence or defect, which challenged attention, and drew forth liking or aversion from those who read his poems.<sup>1</sup> The 'gnomic' poetry of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. gave wise precepts for conduct, which are often referred to by later writers. In like manner, the 'seven sages' of the sixth century influenced ethical thought sufficiently to make their maxims worthy of the attention of Plato and Aristotle. The first of the original thinkers before Socrates was Pythagoras, but in his case it is difficult to distinguish between fact and legend. Concerning his teaching, Sidgwick says<sup>2</sup> : 'In his precepts of moderation, courage, loyalty in friendship, obedience to law and government ; in his recommendation of daily examination . . . we may discern an effort, striking in its originality and earnestness, to mould the lives of men as much as possible into the likeness of God.' This summary shows that at a very early period there

<sup>1</sup> Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

was a power of insight in man sufficient to mark the distinction between right and wrong conduct, and to point the path towards higher and purer ideals.

The great work of Socrates cannot possibly be told in a few sentences ; it was not so much constructive as destructive. He charged the Sophists of his day with teaching justice, temperance, &c., without understanding what these names meant. Aristotle says that his chief service to philosophy consisted in introducing inductions and definition. To most people his value seems to be that he prepared the ground for his great successors, Plato and Aristotle, by drawing attention to the need of knowledge in the attainment of virtue.<sup>1</sup> It seemed to Socrates that if a man knew 'the good' he could not possibly choose the evil ; and he gave an impulse to the acquiring of knowledge, which bore rich fruit in his pupils. To Plato, the disciple of Socrates, we owe the first statement of the four cardinal virtues : Wisdom or Prudence, Courage,

<sup>1</sup> 'I hold that Socrates, as all are agreed, was the first whose voice charmed away philosophy from the mysterious phenomena over which Nature has cast a veil, and with which all philosophers before his time busied themselves, and brought it face to face with social life, so as to investigate virtue and vice, and the general distinction between good and evil, and led it to pronounce its sentence, that the heavenly bodies were either far removed from the sphere of our knowledge, or contributed nothing to right living, however much the knowledge of them might be attained.'—Cicero, *Acad. Poster.*, i. 4 (Reid's translation).

## PAGAN MORALITY.

Temperance, and Justice. These virtues embody an ideal which was constant in all subsequent Greek ethical schools. 'A Greek was expected to develop these virtues.'<sup>1</sup> However wide the divergence between Greek theory and practice, the 'ideal' remained as an abiding witness to the power of the natural conscience of man.

From Plato we pass naturally to his greatest pupil, Aristotle, who first made a scientific study of ethics. His power was in analysis; and he discoursed in masterly fashion on virtues such as liberality, high-mindedness, gentleness, truthfulness, &c. He strongly opposed the Socratic maxim that virtue was knowledge of the good, and held that it was the habit of right choosing. 'Virtue differed from skill, in involving a deliberate choice of virtuous acts, for the sake of their intrinsic moral beauty, and not for any end external to the act.'<sup>2</sup> Of all the writers of antiquity none has so powerfully influenced later Christian thought than Aristotle. Dante saw in him 'the master of the sapient throng,'<sup>3</sup> and Aquinas endeavoured to combine the ethical teaching of Christianity with the system laid down by the great Greek philosopher.

<sup>1</sup> T. B. Strong's *Christian Ethics*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> See Sidgwick's *History of Ethics*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Inferno*, iv. 128 (Cary's translation).

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

### THE PAULINE SCHEME OF THE VIRTUES COMPARED WITH THE PLATONIC AND ARISTOTELIAN.

(a) The four cardinal virtues of the Platonic and Aristotelian scheme have already been stated ; they are Wisdom (or Prudence), Courage, Temperance, and Uprightness (or Justice). To these were added Truthfulness and Honesty. Although there is no list of cardinal virtues laid down in St. Paul's writings, yet the virtues of Plato and Aristotle are in different forms continually appearing.

(1) *Wisdom* (σοφία). St. Paul distinguishes between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God ; and charges upon the wisdom of the world the defect, that the world through its wisdom had been unable to attain a knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup> Owing to this defect the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the reasonings (διαλογισμοί) of the wise are vain.<sup>2</sup> A wisdom which could not even discover God had no attractions for St. Paul ; but he declares that there is another wisdom, not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world. This wisdom is the eternal purpose of God to redeem the world through Christ.<sup>3</sup> It is taught to men by the Holy Spirit,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 20, 21.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 19, 20.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6-8.



## PAGAN MORALITY.

operating in the Church, and is manifold, *i.e.*, it manifests itself in the various forms of the divine purposes, which all co-operate towards a single end—the salvation of all mankind.<sup>1</sup> It brings to the Christian a true understanding of God and of His redemptive purpose in Christ. It was the prayer of St. Paul that this spirit of wisdom might be given to the saints to enlighten their heart, and to enable them to realise their calling.<sup>2</sup> From this we gather that the wisdom which St. Paul teaches is entirely different from the σοφία of the Greeks. It was never speculative nor uncertain, but something definite, learnt in the school of Christ, who was to him ‘God manifest in the flesh.’ Only once in his writings does St. Paul mention φιλοσοφία, and this he joins with ‘vain deceit.’<sup>3</sup> Ellicott does not think that there is sufficient ground for thinking that St. Paul referred to Greek philosophy in this passage, but thinks that he was rebuking the theosophy of Jewish birth and Oriental affinities, which was so firmly rooted in Phrygia.<sup>4</sup> This view is probably correct. The Apostle’s silence regarding Greek philosophy must not be construed as the result of ignorance or indifference. His

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ellicott, *Epistle to Colossians*, p. 152.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

work at Athens is a proof that he was conversant with the regular Socratic style of free discussion in the Agora, and his speech before the Council of the Areopagus shows that he was aware of the efforts of the Greek philosophers to understand the divine nature. Bartlet, describing his speech, says: 'He proceeds to utter, in lofty language, the profoundest ideas of natural theology, pressing into the service, not only the deeper intuitions of the Stoics as to the immanent presence of the Divine in and with the human, but even a fine, if familiar, maxim of the Greek poets, "For even His offspring are we."'<sup>1</sup> But if his speech shows that he was familiar with Greek philosophy, it also shows that he knew its limitations. 'What, therefore, ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you.'<sup>2</sup> They with their philosophy had not found God. St. Paul, through the wisdom given him from Christ, was able to set forth the nature and the will of Him after whom they had been seeking.

(2) *Courage* (ἀνδρεία). This word is not found in St. Paul's writings; but the virtue is not forgotten by the Apostle, for he enjoins the Corinthians to be courageous (ἀνδρίξεσθε) and to be strong (κραταιοῦσθε).<sup>3</sup> He reminds Timothy

<sup>1</sup> Bartlet, *Apostolic Age*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

## PAGAN MORALITY.

that God did not give us ‘a spirit of cowardice.’ Also, St. Paul himself was a striking example of personal courage. As already stated, in the great riot at Ephesus<sup>2</sup> his friends had difficulty in restraining him from rushing into the amphitheatre to face a furious mob. In Jerusalem, although beaten by the people and threatened with death, he asked and obtained leave to address the multitude, and boldly professed his faith in the Lord Jesus. When in danger of shipwreck, in the midst of men who had lost all hope, the Apostle stood forth with undaunted courage, and by his example restored their failing hearts.<sup>3</sup> His whole career manifests a spirit which he desired to see in all Christians, a spirit bold to oppose all evil, and to contend earnestly for the faith. The striking figure of the Soldier of Christ given in the Epistle to the Ephesians is preceded by the words, ‘Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.’<sup>4</sup> Further, St. Paul knew not only the value of courage but its source; he had learnt through his weakness to find strength in God<sup>5</sup>—not the *ἀνδρεία* of Aristotle, which was confined to courage in war, but a fortitude which bears itself bravely in all the adverse circumstances of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 30, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxvii. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. vi. 10.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

life, and refuses to despair. This spirit is often expressed by *ὑπομονή* ('patient endurance'), especially in persecution and tribulation, with a firm attitude in combating every form of evil. It is this Christian 'courage' which has been so remarkable in Great Britain and her Colonies in the terrible War still being waged. From the purely military standpoint, it seemed that our intervention in the War would only involve us in utter ruin. With an army insignificant in numbers and deficient in munitions, it appeared almost impossible, in the early stages of the War, that the victorious hosts of Germany could be arrested. Yet, with a heroism which faltered before no difficulty, our little army took a noble part in helping to hold the enemy at bay, while the 'courage' of our nation rose to the highest level of moral vigour, and from every town and village in Britain, from every distant colony of the British Empire, men poured forth without compulsion with a fixed determination to right the wrongs of devastated Belgium, and to affirm the moral consciousness taught by our Christian faith against the perversion of all morality, manifest in the actions of the Great Power which aimed at world domination and hesitated at no outrage to attain its ends.

## PAGAN MORALITY.

(3) *Temperance* (ἐγκράτεια). This virtue occupies a prominent place in St. Paul's teaching. It was one of the subjects upon which he discoursed before Felix at Cæsarea,<sup>1</sup> and finds a place among those virtues which are named as the 'fruit of the Spirit.'<sup>2</sup> The Christian ἐπίσκοπος was not only to be just and holy, he must also be 'temperate' (ἐγκρατής).<sup>3</sup> St. Paul's own life was marked by this virtue. Although he claimed liberty to marry, yet he abstained from marriage, in order that he might be more free to preach the Gospel. He preferred to labour with his own hands for the supply of his bread, rather than enjoy the provision he might have claimed as an Apostle of Christ. The Epistle to the Philippians shows that he was often in need, yet he bore his afflictions with contentment, and says, 'I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me';<sup>4</sup> and again, 'I buffet my body and bring it into bondage lest after I have preached to others I myself should be rejected.'<sup>5</sup> This virtue, so needful in St. Paul's time, is pressed upon the Christian at the present day. Many of the evils from which the world is suffering are the results of a lack of temperance. Devotion to pleasure, extravagance in dress, excess

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Titus i. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

in eating and drinking, need to be exorcised from our midst. One great hope, which cheers many hearts to-day, is, that the War may impress upon the world the value of temperance in every department of human life ; and that the spirit of self-denial manifest in the wonderful sacrifices made by millions may survive when peace is restored to the world.

(4) *δικαιοσύνη*, the fourth Platonic virtue, which Plato held to be the regulating principle of all the virtues, and, though last in order, yet first in importance, signified 'moral uprightness,' to which Aristotle added the idea of Justice, both reparative and distributive. In St. Paul's teaching this word is constantly used, but has generally a theological meaning. It stands for the whole content of moral perfection, as found in those who are 'in Christ.' It is the righteousness in which a man is clothed who stands in a spiritual relation to God as pardoned, and accepted, through Jesus Christ. It is not attained by human effort, but is a gift of Divine grace. St. Paul contrasts it with the righteousness which might be attained through human effort, and maintains its higher spiritual value. His desire was to gain Christ, and to be found in Him, 'not,' he says, 'having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law,

## PAGAN MORALITY.

but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'<sup>1</sup>

δικαιοσύνη is also used by St. Paul with an ethical meaning, as expressing right conduct towards men,<sup>2</sup> and includes the moral uprightness, and scrupulous justice, which the Greek philosophers taught. St. Paul's desire was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, and perfection involved the moral standard of the Platonic δίκαιος, but much more, even the attainment of the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

(b) To the pagan virtues already noted, St. Paul added the specially Christian virtues of humility and love. The importance attached to humility will be considered under the 'passive virtues'; at present it will suffice to show its relation to the virtue of love. Pride and arrogance cannot exhibit Christian love; a lowly estimate of self is needful for the exhibition of this supreme Christian virtue. The humble-minded man is not severe in his judgments of his fellow-men, for he knows his own failings, and he is quick to see goodness in others, because he is

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> This use of the word is common in contemporary literature. ὁσιότης μὲν πρὸς θεόν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους θεωρεῖται.—*Philo de Abraham*, vol ii., p. 30, ed. Mang.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

striving to cultivate goodness in himself. Love grows readily where the soil is a kindly sympathetic view of others, and this was manifest in St. Paul's own history. He had been drawn to a richer life, not by his strict obedience to the law, but by realising that Christ loved him, and had given Himself for him. This Divine love penetrated his whole being, and influenced all his relations towards his fellow-men. He never forgot that he had 'obtained mercy,'<sup>1</sup> and this thought led him to desire to impart to others the love which he had experienced, in order that they might be partakers of its richness and fulness. This love, when appropriated by the soul, radiates out in love to God, and in love to all God's creatures. It has and can have no limits, and manifests itself in all the manifold modes set forth so wonderfully in 1 Cor. xiii. It is the unifying and regulating influence in every Christian life, and on the other hand reaches out to all human relations which are agreeable to the will of God.<sup>2</sup> To St. Paul, it was a possession which could not be lost. He asks, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' and, in a passage of matchless beauty, cries, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Baunard, *L'Apôtre S. Jean*, p. 342.



## PAGAN MORALITY.

things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' <sup>1</sup>

Thus in St. Paul's ethics 'love' occupies the supreme place. It is the source of all virtues, and takes the position in his ethics which is occupied by *δικαιοσύνη* in the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies.

(c) There are impressive differences to be noted between the classification of the virtues by the Greek teachers, and the ethical teaching of St. Paul. One of these is the difference of aim. The Greek philosophers did not attempt to give an exhaustive list of all the virtues, but to provide a general scheme, by the aid of which a virtuous life might be built up. They directed their ethical teaching towards good citizenship. The later Stoics expanded the idea of citizenship beyond the limits of the Greek state, and addressed their teaching to men, as citizens of the world.

St. Paul's teaching regarding the Church, as the body of Christ, a Church wide as the universe, into which all men might enter, freed morality still further from limitations, and broadened its application to embrace every human being. He

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 38, 39.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

laid down no such definite scheme of virtues as the Aristotelian, but he taught the most important elements of the adornment of a Christian life, and gave a spiritual principle, which, if followed, would provide for all men a means for reaching the perfection which was the ideal of his Master. It is in this loftiness and breadth of purpose, and through its spiritual principle, that St. Paul's ethics rises above all pagan philosophies. The latter had advanced far in teaching rightness of purpose, in the choice of virtue for its own sake, in the control of vicious tendencies, all of which were essential points in Aristotle's scheme ; but no pagan philosopher could conceive right conduct apart from knowledge or wisdom, the heritage of the leisured and independent class. Aristotle had 'no beatitudes for the poor.'<sup>1</sup> Hence arose a two-fold morality ; a higher one for the learned, a lower one for the ignorant. St. Paul knew no such distinction ; 'love' and 'spirituality' were possible for all men, and through these the loftiest heights of moral excellence might be reached.

In maintaining the superiority of Christian ethics to that of the heathen world, there is no intention to belittle the advance which had been made by the Greek philosophers towards a higher

<sup>1</sup> Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*, p. 57.

## PAGAN MORALITY.

morality. It was partly upon their foundation that Christian teachers built, but they added what was lacking in the ideas of paganism, and through their additions, so profoundly modified the character of the moral conceptions they took over from the past as to make them practically new conceptions. The new conceptions had henceforth to be defined in relation to an environment of spiritual truth and fact, which did not exist for pre-Christian morality. Prof. Findlay says: 'The order and proportion of the virtues was changed, the moral scenery of life was shifted.'<sup>1</sup> Strong remarks how the four cardinal virtues were transformed, when they were included in the ethical teaching of Thomas Aquinas, and of the greater schoolmen.<sup>2</sup>

It may seem at times that St. Paul altogether rejected the idea that Gentile morality had any worth. In the Ephesian epistle he wrote: 'This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Doctrine and Morals*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Ethics*, p. 141.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.'<sup>1</sup> Nothing can present to us a more lurid picture of Gentile degradation than the tremendous philippic in Romans i. That it is not an exaggeration can be abundantly proved from contemporary writings. Lecky and Gibbon both describe the condition of European morals as being utterly debased in the time when St. Paul wrote. But terrible as his indictment is, he did not fail to recognise that there were counter influences at work among the heathen. To these he refers in Romans ii: 'For when Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them.'<sup>2</sup> These words show that St. Paul recognised that conscience was still alive in the heathen world. Also, in rebuking the sin of the incestuous person, he refers to it as 'not even among the Gentiles.'<sup>3</sup> Thus he notes that there was some standard of conduct, some sense of moral duty directing or restraining the Gentiles. It was to the ethical standard of the time that St. Paul appeals when

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 17, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. v. 1.

## PAGAN MORALITY.

he says, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'<sup>1</sup> The inference to be drawn from all this is unmistakable. In St. Paul's mind, to live in conformity with the Divine will meant, as McGiffert says,<sup>2</sup> to live in conformity with the universal human conscience. It meant of course much more than this, but never less. If honesty, industry, temperance, and justice were binding on a heathen, still more were they upon a Christian, and no properly instructed Christian could speak lightly of them. In a word, natural morality was the foundation which St. Paul assumed and on which he built. 'Suppose,' says Dr. Knight, 'a cultivated Athenian youth to have embraced Christianity, the old virtues he had learnt would not be uprooted. He would still practise them, but they would be transformed; he would never despise them. The new Christian ethics would not destroy, but fulfil them.'<sup>3</sup>

In our own time there is a pressing necessity for an ethical revival, a need of a higher morality within the brotherhood of the Church. When

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See McGiffert's *Apostolic Age*, p. 507.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Ethic*, p. 62.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Christians fall below the level of the irreligious in their moral conduct, if they are less honest, less truthful, less scrupulous, Christ is wounded in the house of His friends. The worst symptom of the decay of a Church is the weakening of its moral fibre, the blurring of the moral vision of its children. We need to remember that the firm foundation of God has a two-fold seal : ' The Lord knoweth them that are His,' and also, ' Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

IT has been seen that natural morality had reached a high point in the pagan philosophies, and that the virtues enjoined found a place in St. Paul's ethics ; but there is original teaching in Christianity which brings us to a type of ethical doctrine directly due to the influence of the life and teaching of Christ. This type is illustrated by a passage in the Epistle to the Colossians : ' Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving each other ; if any man have a complaint against any, even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye.' <sup>1</sup> It is this class of ethical teaching that is now to be examined. We seek to find out what St. Paul meant by these and similar precepts : how a Christian must bear himself in adversity, and when suffering wrong from another. The consideration of the passive virtues has special interest in the

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 12, 13.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

present day, when the cry for reprisals in war comes from so many lips. We are bound to ask ourselves how would our Lord and His Apostles have responded to the cry. Does the defiance of all Christian morality on the part of enemies justify the lowering of the standard established by the moral consciousness of the Christian world, in consequence of the ethical teaching of the New Testament? Are we to go back to the old Jewish ethics, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?' Our answer must surely be that the inculcation of the passive virtues is not for one time, but for all time; they form part of the essentials of the Christian character, and cannot be set aside without peril to the whole of the ethics of our faith.

### ST. PAUL'S TEACHING.

The remarkable fulness with which St. Paul deals with the passive virtues is significant. Omitting for the present his precepts regarding anger and resentment, we may group his teaching around three great ethical maxims:

- (a) 'Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, each counting other better than himself.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 3.



## THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

(b) 'Love suffereth long and is kind.'<sup>1</sup>

(c) 'Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye.'<sup>2</sup>

Humility, meekness, forgiveness—these are the root, the flower, and the fruit of the Christian temper.

(1) *ταπεινοφροσύνη*. This word apparently gave some trouble to the revisers of the New Testament. It is rendered by 'humility,'<sup>3</sup> 'lowliness,'<sup>4</sup> and 'lowliness of mind.'<sup>5</sup> The classical Greek *ταπεινότης* had a sense of 'meanness' attached to it, but St. Paul uses *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, as expressing a great Christian virtue, for through it he teaches a wise and lowly estimate of ourselves. The word stands before 'meekness' and 'long-suffering,' in the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, as though a right estimate of self was a preliminary to a right estimate of what is due to others. It describes the spirit of one who has come to the knowledge of himself in his relation to God. It is not so much a social as a religious virtue; it has, first of all, reference not to man, but to God. This removes all idea of 'meanness,' associated in former times with 'humility.' It does not imply thinking about ourselves worse than we deserve, nor does it

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 4. <sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 13. <sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 12. <sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 2. <sup>5</sup> Acts xx. 19.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

imply that we are to be trampled upon by our fellow-men at their pleasure. True humility sets us in the right attitude towards God, and removes all slavish fear of men. 'The first test of a truly great man,' says Ruskin, 'is his humility. But,' he continues, 'I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power or hesitation in speaking his opinions. . . . All great men not only know their business, but know that they know it, and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them; only they do not think much of themselves on that account, and they do not expect their fellow-men therefore to fall down and worship them. They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them, and they could not do or be anything else than God made them.' <sup>1</sup>

Humility, though it has reference primarily to God, yet has immediate results in our bearing towards others. Arrogance carries its head high and refuses to surrender one jot or tittle of what is due to it, but humility, remembering its past, always conscious of the Divine forgiveness, will gladly bow its head. It is but natural that when St. Paul enjoins humility, he joins with it meekness

<sup>1</sup> *Frondes Agrestes*, p. 13.

## THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

and long-suffering. Yet these two words, *πραΰτης* and *μακροθυμία*, do not exhaust all that St. Paul has to say concerning our duty in the presence of suffering and wrong-doing, and some of the treasures which he brings to light are worth examination.

(2) *αὐτάρκεια*. The Stoics used this word to express independence of external circumstances. Socrates, when asked, 'Who is the wealthiest?' replied, 'He that is content with least, for *αὐτάρκεια* is nature's wealth.'<sup>1</sup> St. Paul declared, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.'<sup>2</sup>

Findlay says, 'The Christian self-sufficiency is relative, it is an independence of the world, through dependence upon God.' The Stoic self-sufficiency pretends to be absolute; the one is the contentment of faith, the other of pride. Cato and Paul both stand erect and fearless before a persecuting world, one with a look of rigid and defiant scorn, the other with a face lighted up with unutterable joy in God, now cast down with sorrow, now wet with tears for God's enemies. The Christian martyr and the Stoic suicide are the final examples of these two memorable and contemporaneous protests against the evils of the world.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Epistle to Philippians*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Doctrine and Morals*, p. 34.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

(3) *ὑπομονή*.<sup>1</sup> This word frequently occurs in St. Paul's writings, and usually means 'patience,' or 'patient enduring.' But while our word 'patience' is purely passive, in St. Paul's writings it is also 'active.' It implies not only endurance, but perseverance. It is the brave steadfastness of the man who, undaunted by difficulties, steers his course straight on towards his goal.

The previous words describe the Christian temper under suffering. We turn now to a group of words in which the 'suffering' is inflicted by others.

(4) *μακροθυμία* is the self-restraint which does not hastily seek for retaliation. As *γλυκύθυμος* means sweet-tempered, and *ὀξύθυμος* sharp-tempered, so *μακροθυμία* is literally long-temperedness. An attempt was made to introduce the word 'longanimity' into our language, but it failed; it would have exactly interpreted St. Paul's *μακροθυμία*.

<sup>1</sup> If we trace this word back to its place among the Platonic virtues, it will correspond to *ἀνδρεία*. But in the pagan scheme this virtue was almost entirely active. In the Christian Ethic, *ὑπομονή* represents the spirit which follows the complete surrender of the life to God, and manifests itself in both doing and suffering. The pagan standpoint of self-complacency and self-sufficiency naturally made the prominent idea in *ἀνδρεία* one of active conflict, and the passive element was suppressed, but in the Christian mode of contemplation the passive element is prominent, in connection with humility, surrender to God, and a holy love. It is the leading principle of Christianity that the world is overcome by suffering, even as Christ overcame.

## THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

(5) *πραΰτης*<sup>1</sup> (meekness). This word opposes all harshness or rudeness in our bearing towards others. The meek man thinks as little of his personal claims as the humble man of his personal merits. The slight difference between *μακροθυμία* and *πραΰτης* has been defined thus: the 'long-minded' man does not get angry soon, the 'meek-minded man' does not get angry at all. But this distinction is not tenable, for, with all its commendations of meekness, the New Testament commends no man for inability to be angry. In translating *πραΰτης* Bishop Lightfoot prefers 'gentleness' to 'meekness,' and describes it as a 'characteristic of true spirituality.'<sup>2</sup>

(6) *ἐπιείκεια*. This beautiful word has been a considerable trouble to our translators. In Acts xxiv. 4 it is translated 'clemency'; in 2 Cor. x. 1, 'gentleness'; in Phil. iv. 5, the A.V. translates τὸ ἐπιεικές 'moderation,' and the R.V. 'forbearance,' with 'gentleness' in the margin. 'Sweet-reasonableness' is Matthew Arnold's well-known equivalent. In Aristotle's *Ethics*, the ἐπιεικής stands in contrast to the ἀκριβοδίκαιος, as being satisfied with less than his due.'<sup>3</sup> Bishop

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 21; 2 Cor. x. 1; Gal. v. 23, vi. 1; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 15; Titus iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle to Galatians*, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, v. 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Lightfoot reminds us that the quality of ἐπιείκεια was signally manifested in our Blessed Lord Himself (2 Cor. x. i.)<sup>1</sup>.

(7) χρηστότης. This word is rendered 'good' (Rom. iii. 12); 'goodness' (Rom. ii. 4, xi. 22), but elsewhere 'kindness.' In Rom. xi. 22, it is set in contrast with ἀποτομία (severity). Bishop Lightfoot says that the word is not 'passive,' like μακροθυμία, but 'neutral,' 'a kindly disposition towards one's neighbours, not necessarily taking a practical form,'<sup>2</sup> but it certainly has a passive side. Christ's yoke is χρηστός, as having nothing harsh or galling about it; yet it has to be borne.

(8) ἀνεξίκακος (patient of wrongs) is translated in R.V. as 'forbearing,' and is joined with ἡπιος (gentle) in the beautiful passage 2 Tim. ii. 24.

In addition to these special precepts, we find frequent exhortations from St. Paul to his readers to be at peace both among themselves and with all men,<sup>3</sup> and to follow after things which make for peace.<sup>4</sup>

If humility is the foundation of Christian moral conduct, forgiveness (ἄφεσις) is the crown.<sup>5</sup> In our relations with our fellow-men, we cannot

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle to Philippians*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle to Galatians*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 12; Rom. xii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiv. 19.

<sup>5</sup> On the difference between ἄφεσις and πάρεσις see Trench's *Synonyms*.

## THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

avoid meeting with those who make it their business to oppose us, and often are capable of inflicting injuries upon us. One of the greatest practical difficulties in the Christian faith is to *preserve the spirit of Christ in our dealings with such persons*. It is not sufficient to bear patiently with them, not enough to refuse to retaliate; no negative position can suffice; there must be positive forgiveness. St. Paul's teaching is perfectly clear on this point, and is in close agreement with the doctrine of Christ. Evil must be faced and overcome by good. The Corinthians, when suffering from a grievous scandal, caused by an evildoer in their church, are exhorted to forgive the penitent sinner, lest such an one be swallowed up by overmuch sorrow.<sup>1</sup> There is a fine ring in the exhortations: 'Bless them that curse you, bless and curse not.' 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.'<sup>2</sup> The right attitude of the Christian man to his fellows is well expressed in the words, 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 14, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 32.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PAULINE IDEAL.

THE ethical doctrine thus sketched could not fail to attract attention, especially from those who had been educated in pagan surroundings. The greatest and noblest Greek philosophers, who discoursed so eloquently upon 'friendship,' had no message of kindness for enemies. The thirst for revenge is so strong in the natural man that a voice proclaiming it sinful was at least sure of a hearing. But the Pauline teaching was made a thousandfold more impressive because what it enjoined was also exhibited; its ideal was there, set forth in a perfect human life. St. Paul's ethics was not constructed out of his own mind, but was the inevitable result of his knowledge of the actual life of Jesus. We have already noted that it has been asserted by many writers that, beyond the facts of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, St. Paul had little acquaintance with His life and teaching. How untrue this statement is may be further shown from St. Paul's Epistles.



## THE PAULINE IDEAL.

He could say to the Philippians, 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,'<sup>1</sup> and proceed to show the humility and obedience which marked the life of our Lord. And, if St. Paul's exhortations concerning patience, meekness, and forgiveness, have weight with us to-day, it is because he reflects perfectly the life and teaching of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not;'<sup>2</sup> and when He died, prayed for His murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'<sup>3</sup> This relation between the Divine example and human duty is continually present to the mind of St. Paul in his reference to the passive virtues. The long-suffering (*μακροθυμία*) and kindness (*χρηστότης*) which we are to show in our dealings with others, are abundantly made manifest in God's dealings with us through His Son.<sup>4</sup> The forgiveness we receive from Him is the true measure of the forgiveness we must extend to others. St. Paul's method is, he begins with God, manifest in the historic Christ, the Incarnate Son, who stands in direct relation to man, and to whom man is united by faith in His redemption. From this relation St.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 4, xi. 22.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Paul deduces the character and measure of human obligation. Take, for instance, the great passage on the Incarnation, in Philippians ; there the self-emptying and humiliation of our Lord are brought before us, to lend emphasis to the exhortation to be lowly-minded : ' Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'<sup>1</sup> In 2 Thess. the Apostle prays, ' The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.'<sup>2</sup> Again he writes, ' I entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.'<sup>3</sup> Here, once more, the radiant figure of Christ seems to be present before the Apostle as he pens his epistle to his beloved Corinthians.

But it was in the Cross of Christ that St. Paul found the supreme manifestation of the love which suffereth long, and is kind. ' Being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we endure ; being defamed, we entreat.'<sup>4</sup> Where was this hard lesson learnt ? Surely at the foot of the Cross, where Incarnate Love suffered and was yet undimmed.

Before we pass from St. Paul's teaching on the passive virtues we may well pause to note once more that these virtues were all exhibited in his own life. He never ceased to be humbled by the thought

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5-8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. i.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 12.

## THE PAULINE IDEAL.

of God's infinite mercy, in revealing His Son in him.<sup>1</sup> We may discern in his epistles the manner in which his humility deepened, as he acquired a richer knowledge of the Divine Love. He writes to the Corinthians, 'I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of Christ.'<sup>2</sup>

At a later period of his life, when a prisoner at Rome, he writes, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints'<sup>3</sup>; and, still later, to Timothy, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'<sup>4</sup> 'Unworthy to be an apostle'; 'less than the least of all saints'; 'chief sinner.' Can we doubt the deep humility of the great Apostle, who strove to be an imitator of Him of whom he said, 'He humbled himself'?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. ii. 8.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DIVERGENCE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS ESTABLISHED BY THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF FORGIVENESS.

THERE can be no clearer indication of the estimate put upon humility, in pre-Christian times, than the fact already noted that the Greek language had no word of good credit to represent it. Bishop Lightfoot says, ‘In heathen writers, *ταπεινός* has always a bad meaning—grovelling, abject. In Aristotle, for example, *ταπεινός* is associated with *ἀνδραποδώδης*, in Plato with *ἀνελεύθερος*, in Arrian with *ἀγέννης*. ‘It was one great result of the life of Christ to raise “humility” to its proper level, and if not freshly coined for this purpose, the word *ταπεινοφροσύνη* now first became current, through the influence of Christian ethics.’<sup>1</sup> There is one occasion in the New Testament when the word has not a praiseworthy meaning.’<sup>2</sup> In this case St. Paul is quoting

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle to Philippians*, note on ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. x. i.

## PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

the sneers current in Corinth at his expense ; the speakers knew the word only as one of contempt. Twice in the Colossian Epistle <sup>1</sup> St. Paul uses the word in disparagement. These are the only exceptions to the general rule.

No less sharp is the contrast between paganism and Christianity in the case of forgiveness. There are isolated cases of generosity towards enemies, but these cannot efface the deep distinction between pagan and Christian practice. Plutarch tells us that the inscription on the tomb of Sulla was, ' No man did ever pass him, neither in doing good to his friends nor in doing mischief to his enemies.' The stern, hard, cold Roman, who knew no feeling of pity for his enemies, and is continually appearing in ancient history, was typical of the pagan attitude towards those who had given offence, a type exactly the opposite of the Christian as sketched by St. Paul.

While praising the passive virtues, it is necessary to bear in mind how easily they are counterfeited ; there is a pride which apes humility. One of the most striking characters of Charles Dickens was always professing his humility, while acting in the most despicable way. Also meekness does not mean tameness ; to be poor in spirit

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 18, 23.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

does not mean poor-spirited. The nature which exercises self-restraint and avoids self-assertion has nothing in common with the amiability which merely strives to please. Nor does a forgiving spirit imply complacency towards evil and an inability to show anger. It is far from being true that love and anger cannot dwell together in the same mind. The truth is, that he who has lost the power to be angry has lost much of his power to love.

The various misconceptions of the passive virtues usually spring from the idea that they are all in some way or another associated with weakness. Such is not St. Paul's conception. No one was more passively virtuous than he was, yet no one could flame out in righteous anger more vehemently than he. On one memorable occasion he withstood St. Peter to the face, because he stood condemned.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul knew when to give way and when to stand firm. His passivity of soul never affected his moral energy, and we find him not only enjoining all patience and long-suffering, but praying that the Colossians may be able to practise these virtues, by being strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory.<sup>2</sup> Men never need more the strength

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 11.

## PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

which comes from God than when they are called upon to forbear and to forgive. 'Stronger is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'

Although it is asserted that Christianity has done little to make men forgiving, and the present War presents a saddening spectacle to all who love the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, yet there is no need to despair. Many strongholds, in which evil seemed impregnable in heathen times, have fallen before the assaults of Christianity. Revenge, it has been truly said, is the last stronghold of the natural man. It is the last position he holds against the spirit of the Gospel, and some day it will fall as other strongholds of evil have fallen. It must never be forgotten that forgiveness is the peculiar characteristic of Christianity, as the author of *Ecce Homo* points out, and when a Christian spirit is spoken of, it is a forgiving spirit which is usually meant. The pagan in us all dies hard, but when from our hearts we have learnt to forgive he receives his death-blow.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

LECKY, in his *History of European Morals*, makes the serious charge against early Christianity that the new faith made no appeal to the intellectual virtues, and brought about a 'complete overthrow of intellectual freedom.' In making this charge, which is practically a claim for more freedom in religious thought, Lecky overlooks the point that in the case of secular knowledge there is no established 'deposit of truth,' variance from which involves sin, and therefore philosophers are at liberty to discuss such themes to their hearts' content. But in Christianity there is a *depositum fidei*, disagreement from which involves heresy and leads to schism, sins which are condemned by St. Paul. Intellectual activity is not denied to Christians, but the activity must not run counter to the revelation of God in



## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

Jesus Christ ; it must be limited within bounds, which include all the truths taught by our Lord and His Apostles.<sup>1</sup>

Not only does Lecky charge early Christianity with a lack of intellectual freedom, but also he places the period which followed the conversion of Constantine as lower in intellectual virtues than any other period in the history of mankind, and says : ' The noble love of truth, the sublime and scrupulous justice to opponents, which was the glory of the ancient philosophers, was for centuries after the destruction of philosophy almost unknown in the world.'<sup>2</sup> The controversies of the early Church reveal an intolerance of opposition and an intensity of bigotry which left an evil example to later ages, and still mar many characters which are, in other spheres of conduct, conspicuous for their virtue. The duty of thinking, the sacredness of fact, the fearless love of truth, the obligation to avoid passion and prejudice, have never received from the general body of Christian men the full and ungrudging recognition that is their due. While this is admitted, it ought to be clearly recognised that the failure is due to the manifestation of Christianity in history rather than to its

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Tim. i. 18-20 ; 1 Tim. vi. 3 ; 2 Tim. ii. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I., pp. 176 (footnote), 428 ; Vol. II., p. 15.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

original spirit, as revealed in the New Testament. No fair-minded reader of St. Paul's Epistles could charge their writer with either credulity or bigotry. These remarkable documents, many of them written long before the Gospels, constitute the earliest and most authoritative exposition of the mind of Christ in our possession, and are remarkable for the reverent freedom and boldness with which the Apostle allows his mind to play around the solemn themes of which he writes. It is to this general attitude that we turn, rather than to specific texts (although these are not wanting) in order to learn what may be called the ethics of the intellect according to St. Paul.

(a) In the first place, St. Paul was a deep thinker. 'He belongs,' says Sabatier, 'to the family of powerful dialecticians; he ranks with Plato, with Augustine and Calvin, with Schliermacher, Spinoza, Hegel. An imperious necessity compelled him to give his belief full dialectic expression, and to raise it above contradictories. Having affirmed it, he confronts it at once with its opposite, and his faith is incomplete until it has triumphed over this antithesis and reached a point of a higher unity.'<sup>1</sup> Immediately after his conversion he went into the solitude of the Arabian

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostle Paul*, p. 89.

## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

desert, to think out the new revelation given to him.<sup>1</sup>

That St. Paul was in possession of all the main elements of the Gospel, before he began to preach it, is certain. His thoughts kept pace with his missionary zeal. As he entered upon new fields of thought, and gathered certainty in his new faith, he pressed forward into new fields of service. The powerful emotional appeals in the Pauline Epistles have often obscured, to the reader, the underlying intellectuality of his thought. The Christian heart has been warmed by his glow, but the Christian intellect has not always followed his powerful dialectic. And not only was St. Paul himself a thinker, but also he expected his readers to be thinkers also. While it is probably true, as recent writers like Ramsay and Dobschutz have pointed out, that the early Christian Churches were by no means so exclusively composed of the poor and uncultured, as has been too hastily gathered from the language of 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, yet these classes were undoubtedly largely attracted by the message of hope contained in the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Dobschutz points out that though St. Paul says

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 44, 147; *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 130.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

'not many' wise after the flesh, 'not many' mighty, 'not many' noble are called, yet we must distinguish between 'not many' and 'not any.' Occasionally St. Paul indicates that persons of superior rank were among his converts. Law-suits concerning property indicate a certain social standing. Men like Stephanus, Erastus, and Philemon must have been well to do. The Apostle asked for a large contribution to the Relief Fund from the Corinthians,<sup>2</sup> and although he refused help for his own maintenance the reason was a special one. It was not on account of the poverty of the members of the Church. People who discussed the superiority of the Alexandrian allegorical style of teaching of Apollos could not have been devoid of culture. Could illiterate people have followed the arguments of the Epistles to the Romans, and to the Ephesians? Would the argument for the resurrection, in 1 Cor. xv., be intelligible to uncultivated slaves? Even in the present day there are comparatively few persons who are able to understand and profit by the acute dialectic of the Apostle. From these considerations we may fairly conclude that large numbers of educated and refined persons were included among the earliest converts to Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 2-5.

## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

Another charge against early Christianity is made by Professor Knight, who speaks of the unreflective manner in which the first Christians embraced the Christian religion : ' They seized it first of all,' he says, ' by intuition, by unsophisticated feeling and the response of the heart,' while reflection followed afterwards.<sup>1</sup> There is a certain truth in this : Christianity was not preached as a philosophy. When, at Athens, St. Paul attempted to present it in philosophical language the result was a failure : its appeal was to the felt needs of man, and it first stirred the heart ; but this does not prove that the mind remained dormant and unreflective. Dr. Stalker is much nearer the truth when he says : ' Christianity, as it went through the cities of the world in St. Paul's person, must have gone as a great intellectual awakening, which taught men to use their minds, investigating the profoundest problems of life.'<sup>2</sup> Can we suppose that those who used curious arts at Ephesus burnt their books out of a purely emotional feeling ? Their dupes were doubtless stupid and superstitious, but they themselves were probably intellectual enough to make their calling profitable to themselves.

As an illustration of St. Paul's intellectual

*The Christian Ethic*, pp. 9, 10. <sup>2</sup> *The Preacher and his Models*, p. 244.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

temper we may note his high regard for truth, in spite of his Rabbinical casuistry, which will be discussed later. First, among the things which were to be the subject of Christian meditation, stand 'Whatsoever things are true.'<sup>1</sup> First, in the Christian soldier's equipment, is the girdle of truth.<sup>2</sup> To the Thessalonians he writes, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.'<sup>3</sup> His converts are not to be as children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but to be 'followers of the truth in love.'<sup>4</sup> Christianity, according to St. Paul, has a message of truth to the world. 'Our exhortation,' he writes to the Thessalonians, 'is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.'<sup>5</sup> He is confident that his doctrines are true, as his own motives were pure. He does not corrupt the word of God, nor handle it deceitfully, but commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.<sup>6</sup> He urges Titus in his teaching to show 'uncorruptness'; and exhorts Timothy to prove himself a workman that needed not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.<sup>7</sup> It is significant that each epistle of the captivity, with the exception of the short letter to Philemon, contains a prayer that its

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 8.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 21.    <sup>5</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 3.    <sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15.  
Eph. vi. 14.    <sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 15.    <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 17.

## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

readers may be led into a fuller understanding of the Gospel they had received. ‘ I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened.’<sup>1</sup> The great aim of the Apostle was that his converts should grow in all the virtues of the intellect, should be perfectly truthful, and filled with wisdom and understanding.

### (b) THEIR PLACE IN THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

When we pass from the New Testament period to the subsequent history of the Church, we are conscious of a rapid descent. The intellectual virtues seem to suffer immediate and disastrous collapse. Forgeries and pious frauds abound. Through long ages it seems as though there was no such thing as an ethic of intellect, as if mental morality had ceased to exist. The picture is not quite so black as Mr. Lecky would have us believe, and the faults were not peculiar to early Christianity; they were the faults of the general intellectual character of the time. Christians, as Mr. Lecky admits, in numberless

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 16-18; see also Phil. i. 9, 10; Col. i. 9-11.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

cases refused to act a lie, and comply with heathen forms of worship, even to save their lives. They stood forward as representatives of a moral principle utterly unknown, even amongst the most truth-loving philosophers of the Pagan world. Even Marcus Aurelius failed to understand their inflexibility in maintaining what they held to be true, and ascribed their conduct to obstinacy.

Although Christians may well be proud of the martyr-spirit, which was so conspicuous in the early centuries of the Church, yet we cannot but deplore the endless number of forged documents, which, as Mr. Lecky says, 'is one of the most disgraceful features of the Church history of the first few centuries.'<sup>1</sup> Milman says, 'Christian gratitude and reverence soon began to be discontented with the silence of the authentic writings as to the fate of the twelve chosen companions of Christ. It began first with some modest respect for truth, but soon with bold defiance of probability to lighten their obscure course, till each might be traced, by the blaze of miracle, into remote regions of the world, where it is clear that, if they had penetrated, no record of their existence was likely to survive.'<sup>2</sup> On the ground

<sup>1</sup> *History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 34 (footnote).

<sup>2</sup> *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 13.



## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

of a supposed correspondence with St. Paul, Seneca was claimed by Jerome as 'one of us.'<sup>1</sup> The Acts of Paul and Thecla was the composition of a presbyter who, when he was convicted, confessed that he had written it out of love to St. Paul. The Ignatian epistles were largely interpolated, at an early period, in the interests of the monarchical episcopate. The Sibylline oracles were most amazing pious frauds, which put into the lips of ancient heathens predictions of the Messiah and His sufferings, and of the overthrow of the Roman power. In the Jewish 'Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,' there are notorious Christian interpolations.<sup>2</sup> It was a credulous age, and Christian morality suffered in the general low respect for truth. Bitter taunts, like that of a famous German historian, who classes Christian veracity with 'Punic faith,' owe their sting to the ignoble methods of men, who thought they could serve the kingdom of God by a lie.

### (c) THE PLACE OF THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH TO-DAY.

If we inquire, whether in the Church's life to-day the great Pauline tradition is being main-

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Jov.* i. 49; 'Scripserunt Aristoteles et Plutarchus et noster Seneca.'

<sup>2</sup> So also in Esdras iv.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

tained, the answer must be 'yes' and 'no.' We have moved far from the time when the deliberate falsification of documents was condoned in the interests of the Church; so far, that we are perhaps inclined to be too severe in our judgments of those whose moral standards were not and could not be ours; yet, even now, the place of intellect in religion is very imperfectly recognised. By most Christians it is regarded with suspicion, and many are satisfied to preach what is considered to be 'orthodox religion,' without much intellectual interest in the contents of the Christian revelation. The unspeakably foolish depreciation of theology, the wide gulf which often separates the Christian evangelist from the Christian scholar; the tendency to exalt 'feeling' in religion; the sheer intellectual laziness of many congregations, lulled to indifference by the 'intellectual laziness of many clergymen': all witness to the fact that there is a very feeble recognition of the value of intellect in our present-day religion. We ought to see that this is fraught with peril to the future of the Church. Every day men drift away into unbelief, because they find out, as they grow older, that they have never grasped religion as an intellectual truth. Their general intellectual outlook has been slowly widen-

## THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

ing, while their religious outlook has remained unchanged. Then, when they have failed to find the reconciling point between the faith of childhood and the larger knowledge of mature intelligence, they drift into scepticism. The only hope lies in the recognition that the Gospel has its definite message, which can edify the souls of the simple without affronting the intelligence of the wise; in the realisation that the true evangel is one in which zeal and culture, religion and theology, the heart and the intellect, are yoked together in a common service.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

**I**N his ethical teaching, it was impossible for St. Paul to overlook sins of the tongue. The Greeks were especially prone to these sins, as we may learn from many passages in their literature. Athens is described by pagan dramatists and satirists as a city full of scandal. St. Luke describes the Athenians of his day as caring for nothing, except speaking and hearing some new thing. If St. James, writing to the more serious Hebrews, found it necessary to emphasise the danger to religion from a want of restraint in language, we should expect that St. Paul would not be silent regarding it, in giving advice to the more quick-witted Greeks. Although his writings contain no such definite statements of the danger of the misuse of language, as we find in St. James's Epistle,<sup>1</sup> there is a remarkable list of sins of speech named by him, especially in his later Epistles; when the care of all the Churches weighed heavily

<sup>1</sup> James i. 19, iii. 2-12.

## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

on his mind during his captivity at Rome. The list, with the English equivalent adopted by the R.V., is as follows :

αἰσχρολογία	. .	shameful speaking. <sup>1</sup>
βλασφημία	. .	railing. <sup>2</sup>
(βλάσφημος	. .	railer or blasphemer. <sup>3</sup> )
The verb βλασφημεῖν frequently occurs.		
ἐντραπελία	. .	jesting. <sup>4</sup>
καταλαλιά	. .	backbiting. <sup>5</sup>
(κατάλαλος	. .	backbiter. <sup>6</sup> )
κραυγή	. .	clamour. <sup>7</sup>
λόγος σαπρός	. .	corrupt speech. <sup>8</sup>
ματαιολογία	. .	vain talking. <sup>9</sup>
(ματαιολόγος	. .	vain-talker. <sup>10</sup> )
μωρολογία	. .	foolish talking. <sup>11</sup>
πιθανολογία	. .	persuasiveness of speech. <sup>12</sup>
πικρία	. . .	bitterness. <sup>13</sup>
ψῆνδος	. . .	falsehood <sup>14</sup> (ψεύστης, ψευδολόγος).
ψιθυρισμός	. .	whispering. <sup>15</sup>
(ψιθυριστής	. .	whisperer. <sup>16</sup> )

This long list of sins of speech would lead us

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 31 ; Col. iii. 8 ; 1 Tim. vi. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 13 ; 2 Tim. iii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 4.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. i. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Eph. iv. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Eph. iv. 29.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. i. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Titus i. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. v. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Col. ii. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. iii. 14 ; Eph. iv. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Eph. iv. 25.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Rom. i. 30.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

to expect a full treatment of the ethics of speech, but no formal discussion is found in the Epistles. Warning is given against careless folly in conversation, while definite sins of speech are sternly rebuked, as being unfitting in those who were called to be saints. The great point to be noted is, that St. Paul regards the Christian life as one which ought to stand out as an example to the heathen world, and exhibit restraint from language, not necessarily evil, but marking frivolity of mind. Christians were to be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to each other (or in themselves) 'in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.'<sup>1</sup> It may seem that this is a hard saying, which few could heed; but St. Paul had a high standard, and was bound to set it before his readers as worthy of their attainment. The following divisions may help us to bring out in some connected form the ethical teaching of St. Paul on this subject.

### (a) IDLE WORDS.

Bishop Butler warns against the disposition 'to be talking,'—'abstracted from the consideration of what has to be said, with very little or no

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 19.

## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

regard to, or thought of doing harm or good.' To this category belong the passages 1 Tim. v. 13, 'withal they (the younger widows) learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers (*φλύαροι*) also, and busybodies, speaking things they ought not.' *φλύαρος*, Ellicott says, indicates one who indulges in a babbling, profluent way of talking.<sup>1</sup> In Eph. v. 4 foolish talking (*μωρολογία*) is one of the things named as unbefitting saints. The word denotes a random way of talking, which often passes into sin. It is that talk which is 'foolishness and sin together.'<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 29, 'Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth.' It may perhaps be thought that this belongs to another category, but *σαπρός* is used not only of that which is 'corrupt,' but of that which is 'worthless.'<sup>3</sup> Corrupt speech is condemned in the following chapter; here it is against inept useless talk that St. Paul warns his readers.

Talkativeness is one of those bad habits which few people take seriously; the satire of Horace scathes the talkative man, and brands him as a bore, and modern judgment rarely goes further. How far this is from the tremendous saying of Jesus, 'I

<sup>1</sup> Ellicott's *Pastoral Epistles*, note on 1 Tim. v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Trench's *Synonyms*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 33, xiii. 48.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' With these words ringing in our ears, we may need to ask, what is the sin in idle words? This question was answered by Bishop Butler in his sermon 'On the government of the tongue.' He admits that speech was given to man not only to minister to his needs, but also for his enjoyment, and that this secondary use is in every respect allowable and right. If men will avoid forbidden paths, then their conversation may be as free and unreserved as they please. But great talkers, people who delight in talking for talking's sake, are always on the edge of saying more than they know, and, as St. Paul says about tattlers and busybodies, of speaking things they ought not. This unrestrained wantonness of speech is productive of much evil. It begets resentment in him who is the subject of it ; sows the seeds of strife and dissension among others ; influences little disgusts and offences, which if left alone would wear away of themselves. It has often as bad an effect upon the good name of others as deep envy and malice, and it certainly destroys and perverts a certain equity of the utmost importance to society to be observed, viz., that praise and dispraise of a good or bad character should always be



## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

bestowed according to desert. The tongue used in a licentious manner is like a sword in the hands of a madman, it is employed at random, it can scarcely do any good, it often does harm. Wherefore let no worthless and good-for-nothing speech proceed out of your mouth.<sup>1</sup>

### (b) EVIL SPEAKING.

From much speaking to evil speaking the transition is easy. On this subject a small group of precepts may be found in St. Paul's writings. Twice in the Pastoral Epistles he warns women against degenerating into 'slanderers' (διαβόλοι). There is no temper of mind so entirely unchristian, none that deserves so well the strongest censure, as that shown by the slanderer. Tennyson emphasises this in the lines :

‘Slander, meanest spawn of Hell,  
And women’s slander is the worst.’

What St. Paul warns against is not the kind of slander against which the law of libel provides a remedy; but those slanders which are too subtle for the law to deal with, and which are yet capable of inflicting grave injury upon the slandered. The shrug of the shoulder when a person is men-

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of Talkativeness, see Plutarch's *De Garrulitate*.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

tioned ; the lifting of the eyebrow ; nay, even a marked silence, is sufficient to do the mischief. It is against these subtle forms of slander that the Christian must be on his guard, resolved neither by word nor by gesture to give a false impression of a fellow-man.<sup>1</sup> The Apostle says, 'Put them in mind to speak evil of no man.'<sup>2</sup> And 'Let all railing (βλασφημία) be put away from you,'<sup>3</sup> and 'all shameful speaking (αἰσχρολογία) out of your mouth.'<sup>4</sup> αἰσχρολογία has a double meaning, either 'filthy communication,' such as manifests an impure mind ; or, more generally, foul-mouthed abusiveness. In this passage the more general meaning is to be preferred. Evil-speaking has been reprobated by morality in every age. The Son of Sirach says, 'A backbiting tongue has disquieted many, . . . strong cities hath it pulled down, and overturned the houses of great men.'<sup>5</sup> It is still an evil in every community ; and persons, who shrink from physical violence, have no hesitation in taking away the good name of another. Three things are needful to stay this plague of evil-speaking :

(1) Butler's warning against talking for talk-

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see Robertson's sermon on 'The Tongue (*Sermons*, 3rd series).

<sup>2</sup> Titus iii. 2. <sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 31. <sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 8. <sup>5</sup> Ecclus. xxviii. 14.

## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

ing's sake ; for when other topics are exhausted, it is easy to turn to defamation and scandal.

(2) To avoid talking of the concerns and behaviour of our neighbours. This does not mean that all talk about persons is to be banished from our talks and firesides, for persons must always be to us the chief interest of life. The pity of it is that we turn our attention more to the failings of others than to their virtues. We are quick to recognise their faults, and free in our discussion of them. It is only the spirit of love which can keep us within the limits of safety in conversation about others. Herbert Spencer says, 'If you want to estimate any one's mental calibre, you cannot do better than by observing the ratio of generalities to personalities in his talk—how the simple truths about individuals are replaced by truths abstracted from numerous experiences of men and things.'<sup>1</sup> There is a certain truth in these words, but it overlooks the fact that most of the interest of our lives is derived from those with whom we come in contact, and it is no sign of deficiency of intellect to discuss them in a kindly and friendly spirit. Epictetus also goes too far when he says, 'Let silence be your general rule, or say only that which is necessary, and in a few words . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Study of Sociology*, p. 32.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

above all, avoid speaking of persons, either in the way of praise, or blame, or comparison.'

(3) As we utter no slander, so we must not listen to it. The dealer in slander seeks a market for his wares. If men refused to listen, his wretched business would soon come to an end. No man cares to talk without an audience. When our ears are closed to the voice of the slanderer, his mouth will soon be stopped.

### (c) CORRUPT SPEECH.

Corrupt speech may or may not be the correct translation of *λόγος σαπρός*, which St. Paul forbids in Ephesians.<sup>1</sup> If it is 'corrupt,' there is an interesting parallel in Colossians, 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.'<sup>2</sup> That is, let your speech be always wholesome and untainted. *αἰσχρολογία*, as we have seen, has the meanings of both 'abusive' and 'foul' speech. *αἰσχροτης*<sup>3</sup> is 'filthiness,' whether of word, gesture, or deed ; it includes all indecent talk. The word translated jesting (*εὐτραπεία*), which is joined to *αἰσχροτης*, and declared to be 'unfitting,' does not forbid pure and wholesome mirth. Bright flashes of wit, pleasant gleams of kindly humour, are amongst the joys which light up the dulness of our

<sup>1</sup> iv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 4.

## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

lives. *εὐτραπεία* had at first a harmless meaning. As its derivation implies, its original meaning was 'versatility' in manner or speech. But gradually the word took a darker ethical meaning, and degenerated into low jesting; the kind of wit which has a savour of impurity. Dr. Dale says: 'The jesting which St. Paul describes as "not befitting" is the kind of conversation that reaches its perfection in a civilised, luxurious, and brilliant society, which has no faith in God, no reverence for moral law, no sense of the grandeur of human life, no awe in the presence of the mystery of death. In such a society, to which the world is the scene of a pleasant comedy, in which all men are actors, a polished insincerity, and a versatility which is never arrested by strong and immovable convictions, are the objects of universal admiration. The foulest indecencies are applauded, if they are conveyed under the thin disguise of a graceful phrase, a remote allusion, an ingenious ambiguity. There is a refinement to which, not vice itself, but the coarseness of vice, is distasteful, and which regards with equal resentment the ruggedness of virtue. This is the kind of jesting that St. Paul so sternly condemns.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Ephesians*, p. 331. See also Ellicott on Ephesians, p. 114, and Trench's *Synonyms*, p. 121.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

### (d) UNTRUTHFULNESS.

With regard to this vice St. Paul is emphatic. 'Lie not one to another'<sup>1</sup>; 'Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour.'<sup>2</sup> He warns the Colossians not to be led away by 'persuasiveness of speech' (πιθανολογία).<sup>3</sup> Deacons must not be 'double-tongued.'<sup>4</sup> In his own dealings with his converts, St. Paul repudiates any suspicion of fickleness in his conduct.<sup>5</sup> In his list of law-breakers, when he mentions men guilty of most atrocious crimes, he adds liars and false-swearers.<sup>6</sup> St. Paul does not refer to those questions of casuistry, which are so often discussed by moralists. There are cases when it is possible to deviate from strict truth without immorality. In medicine, in war, in diplomacy, it has been always recognised that latitude is permissible. It is not regarded as sinful for a lonely woman, when faced with possible violence, to pretend she has a protector near at hand; but such cases are seldom met with in life, and do not affect the general principle of truthfulness in our relations with others.

In the consideration of St. Paul's precepts, it is hardly necessary to speak of the grosser forms of

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 9.      <sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 25.      <sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 4.      <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. i. 17.      <sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. i. 10.

## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

falsehood, which are universally condemned by the Christian conscience ; but there are forms of untruth which are not so readily recognised.

(1) Butler reminds us that there is such a thing as plain falseness; and insincerity, in men with regard to themselves. We wish to stand well with ourselves, and this self-interest often blinds us to the truth. There is no more subtle foe than self-deceit. St. Paul warns every man 'not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.'<sup>1</sup> A sober judgment of self would lead to the abandonment of many affectations in our life. Smyth, speaking of this tendency of men to endeavour to present themselves in an unduly favourable light to others, says : 'No one can wear repeatedly the habit of affectation before others except at the cost of his own integrity. Let this habit of untruthfulness in little social things, and daily affectations of manner continue, and a wholly unnatural type of character, eaten out with insincerities, may be the result.'<sup>2</sup>

(2) One of the commonest of these unregarded forms of truth springs from simple inattention and carelessness. How seldom a simple narrative is repeated in the same form as that it originally had. There are persons who have an 'unveracious

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Ethics*, p. 387.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

mind,' they are careless about the exact truth of what they say. The fact is, it requires some trouble to be truthful. 'Speaking truth,' says Ruskin, 'is like writing fair, and comes only by practice, it is less a matter of will than of habit.' What is needed is to 'make conscience' of all we say. To remember the words of our Lord, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'<sup>1</sup>

(3) Closely allied to the fault just noted is the habit of 'exaggeration.' It is so easy to add a little to a story to make it more impressive. There is no intention to hurt any one by the addition, and we forget that we are hurting ourselves. When we deliberately swerve from the strict truth, however little, we are undermining the sacredness of the chief corner-stone of every true and worthy life, and this must result in irreparable injury to our character.

### GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is a very tender and solemn entreaty, and should move us the more as we note the connection in which it stands.

St. Paul has just been warning the Ephesians against idle speech, and passes directly to the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 37.



## THE ETHICS OF SPEECH.

exhortation. When we offend with our tongue, we injure not only our own character, not only our fellow-men, but we grieve the Holy Spirit of God. After the deification of the Roman Emperors it was considered impious to use any coarse language before *their statues*, and ought not we Christian men and women so to keep the door of our lips that we speak no word unworthy of that Presence, from which we can never pass?

## CHAPTER X.

### ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

THE very form in which a large part of the New Testament has come down to us is due to the controversies in which St. Paul was called upon to take a leading part, and our Lord Himself was constantly engaged in strife with those who opposed His claims. Yet the need and temper of controversy are questions which have received small consideration in ethical text-books.

In a survey of St. Paul's ethical teaching it is impossible to ignore St. Paul the controversialist ; and from the ethics of the intellect we turn therefore to the ethics of controversy.

#### (a) THE NEED FOR CONTROVERSY.

In Muller's *Holy and Profane States* 'the Controversial Divine' has a place by the side of 'the Good Judge,' 'the Good Physician,' 'the Faithful Minister.' In the present day controversy is regarded with impatience, and often with contempt. The long controversies on Christological

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

questions in the fourth and fifth centuries ; the renewal of strife after the Reformation, and the bitter spirit which has so often marked the controversialists have led many people to turn away from controversy as though it were altogether opposed to the spirituality of religion. It is not difficult to see how this has come about. When we remember the pettiness and triviality of many of the questions for which men have fought, the fierce and undying animosities which controversy has kindled, the barrenness of the results in most cases ; is it a marvel that to many controversy has had no more value than the cawing of rooks and bickering of jackdaws ? Other reasons have contributed to the same end. The love of ease, the craven fear of conflict ; the 'laissez faire' of modern life ; the weakened regard for the sacredness of truth ; the scepticism which doubts even whether truth can be attained ; the moral cynicism which cries shamelessly, ' Nothing is certain, and nothing matters ' ; all these have contributed towards an aversion from controversy.

It is forgotten that there are questions worth striving for. There are false theories which must be controverted. Professor Gwatkin has taught us what great questions were at issue in the Arian controversy. It was not, as some impatient writers

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

have asserted, whether a word in the Christian creed should be spelt with an 'o,' or an 'oi,' but whether Christ was 'true God,' or 'little better than a heathen demi-god.'<sup>1</sup> Who will deny that this was a question worth even centuries of strife; and that we are indebted to men like Athanasius in the East, and Hilary in the West, who fought the battle for the faith, and helped to draw up the creed, which for nearly sixteen centuries has expressed the faith of practically the whole of the Christian Church? In his account of the closing days of Carlyle's life Froude says: 'In speaking of Gibbon's work to me he made one remark, which is worth recording. In earlier years he had spoken contemptuously of the Athanasian controversy. . . . He told me now that he perceived Christianity itself to have been at stake. If the Arians had won, it would have dwindled away into a legend.'<sup>2</sup>

Or, take the history of the Reformation. Every one knows with what strife of tongue, with what tumult and bloodshed, that great change was accomplished. But if Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin had made no protest, if they had cried, 'peace, peace, when there was no peace,' where

<sup>1</sup> *The Arian Controversy*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Carlyle's Life in London*, vol. ii., p. 494.

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

would have been the great inheritance of freedom upon which, at no price of tears or blood of ours, we have entered. Our present strife with Germany for freedom of a different kind may help us to appreciate the services rendered to religion by the great reformers.

It cannot be denied that Scotland has been plagued with controversies which she might and ought to have been spared; but does any one suppose that Knox and Melville, the Covenanters, and the leaders of the Disruption, were only stern and obstinate men, possessed by an evil spirit of contradiction; and not rather champions of great principles, on which hung mighty issues for themselves, for their country, and for the world.

But it is in the New Testament that we find the most striking evidence of our indebtedness to past controversies. So far as concerns the life of Christ, it may be sufficient to mention that in Dr. Stalker's well-known volume, *Imago Christi*, he tells us that if it had been possible to print in full the evidence from the Gospel for the conduct of Jesus in the different departments of life, of which his book treats, the bulkiest of all these bodies of evidence would have been the appendix to the chapter, 'Christ as a Controversialist.'<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Imago Christi*, p. 285.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Apostle St. John is not usually associated in men's minds with controversy; yet his exhortations to brotherly love are not more frequent and emphatic than is his condemnation of the false teachers; over against whose doctrine he sets forth the truth as it had been revealed to him, by and concerning Jesus Christ. The same is true of St. Paul. He says, 'Certain men came down from Judea, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.'<sup>1</sup> Here was the beginning of a controversy from which for many years St. Paul had no respite. The battle of spiritual freedom had to be fought, not only in Jerusalem, but in the mission field, and in the newly formed Churches. Some of his letters, especially that to the Galatians, are keen controversial documents. And what perhaps went home to St. Paul's heart more than anything, he was compelled to turn his sword against his own comrades-in-arms.<sup>2</sup> In all essential points, St. Paul's Gospel would doubtless

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 11-13.

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

have been given to the world under any circumstances as we have received it, but the particular form it assumed was largely determined by the controversy into which he was driven. We can be certain that Christianity would have been strangled in its cradle if the Judaistic party had won the day.

Facts like these have their significance for us to-day. If the faith 'once delivered unto the saints' is to be kept, it must be fought for.

When the walls of Jerusalem were being built Nehemiah tells us that 'Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side and so builded.'<sup>1</sup> The sword, as well as the trowel, is still needed to build up the Church of Christ. It is a mistaken idea that the kingdom of heaven means first, a quiet life and the cultivation of friendly feeling all round.<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; but it is righteousness that stands first, and the price of righteousness, in a world like ours, is 'conflict.' The Christian Church is more than a Sister of Charity; she is not merely to comfort the sick and sorrowful; not merely to act as peacemaker

<sup>1</sup> Nehem. iv. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Forsyth's *Rome, Reform, and Reaction*, p. 15.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

in strife ; she has to be the 'soldier' as well as the 'servant' of Christ, and to take her part in the eternal warfare between good and evil, between truth and falsehood. Like her Lord, she must often bring, not peace, but a sword. There is, as we know well, a zeal which is not tempered by knowledge, and still less by charity ; a zeal which does not love peace, as peace should always be loved, whose hand flies all too readily to the sword-hilt. But there is a spirit still more to be feared, the spirit which sacrifices principle for the sake of brotherhood ; a moral indifferentism, which is too careless to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, and will tolerate anything so long as it is left in selfish peace.

By all means let us seek peace, but let us not forget, as Ruskin has told us, peace may be sought in two ways : 'one way is as Gideon sought it when he built his altar in Ophrah, naming it "God send peace" ; yet sought this peace that he loved as he was ordered to seek it, and the peace was sent in God's way : "the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon."' <sup>1</sup> And the other way of seeking peace is as Menahem sought it, when he gave the king of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, "that his hand might be with

<sup>1</sup> Judges viii. 28.



## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

him."<sup>1</sup> That is, you may either win your peace or buy it : win it, by resistance to evil—buy it, by compromise with evil. You may buy your peace with silenced consciences ; you may buy it with broken vows ; buy it with lying words ; buy it with base connivances ; buy it with the blood of the slain, and the cry of the captive, and the silence of lost souls.'<sup>2</sup> And that is not peace: it is death.

### (b) DANGERS THAT BESET THE CONTROVERSIALIST.

As controversy cannot be avoided so long as sin disturbs, there is urgent need for those who are compelled to take part in it, to take heed what manner of controversialists Christians ought to be. We turn then to note, still under the guidance of St. Paul, some of the perils which beset the controversial temper.

First among these is the unlovely spirit of contentiousness, which delights in strife, not for the truth's sake, but only for its own sake. This is pure pugilism, and is no more deserving of respect than the spirit of the professional prize-fighter. Every child knows Gulliver's story of the Big-Endians and the Small-Endians, and their barren

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *The Two Paths*, p. 244.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

strife; and the pity of it is that these noisy disputants have found their way into the Church and fill it with their clamour.

“Disputandi pruritus fit Ecclesiarum scabies.”<sup>1</sup> The caustic saying of a college don, that the discussion whether the planets are inhabited was one eminently suited for theology, because no evidence was available on either side of the question, was not an undeserved satire on the tendency of many Christians to waste their strength and learning upon foolish questions, which gender strife, but which, because they are remote from fact and life, do nothing else.

No one knew this better than St. Paul; he wrote to the Corinthians, ‘If any man seemeth contentious (*φιλόνηκος*), we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.’<sup>2</sup> A bishop, he writes to Timothy, must be *ἄμαχος* (not contentious),<sup>3</sup> and in the letter to Titus, this is extended to all sorts and conditions of men.<sup>4</sup> Again, to Timothy, he speaks of those who are puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of

<sup>1</sup> From the inscription which Sir Henry Wotton directed to be placed on the slab which marked his grave.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Titus iii. 2.

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

men corrupt in mind, and bereft of the truth.' <sup>1</sup> In his last letter he bids Timothy charge them over whom he is set in the Lord, 'that they strive not about words, to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear,' and then warns him to 'shun profane babblings,' and to refuse 'foolish and ignorant questionings,' because they gender strifes; and he adds, 'The servant of the Lord must not strive.' <sup>2</sup>

We may be sure that such detailed injunctions were not unneeded, and that St. Paul felt deeply that both clergy and people were in danger of falling into a spirit of contentiousness entirely alien to the spirit of the Gospel. This danger is still with us, and is often accompanied by even worse evils—the loss of temper, misrepresentation, imputation of evil motives—all of which are sins to which controversialists are exposed.

St. Paul himself suffered from the well-developed contentiousness of the Corinthians.<sup>3</sup> In his second Epistle he complains of the treatment meted out to him by his Judaising opponents. When he changed his plans they called him a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. On the striking phrase *νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεως* see Grimm's *Lexicon*, sub *νοσέω*.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 14, 16, 23, 24.

<sup>3</sup> 'The disputatiousness of the Corinthians ran into everything—a woman's shawl, the merits of the Arch-apostles.'—Findlay, *Exposition G.T.*, p. 876.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

yea-and-nay man,<sup>1</sup> who said now one thing and now the opposite, and charged him with fickleness. Then they became abusive. His speech, they said, is rude, and his bodily presence weak ; he might use big swelling words at a distance, but let him come among them, and they would find him meek enough.<sup>2</sup> They even charged him with mercenary motives, and suggested that he was making a good thing out of the collection he was making for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Then, with the versatility of malignity, they turned round and interpreted his refusal to accept support from the Corinthian Church as an acknowledgment that he was an interloper, whose uneasy conscience would not let him claim the maintenance, which was every true apostle's right.<sup>3</sup>

Church history shows us that the controversial spirit of the Corinthians was inherited by later generations, and spread as a disease over the whole Church.

Even good men show no bounds of decency in their language when once they have let loose the controversial spirit. Tertullian denounces those who differ from him on baptism as vipers and monsters.<sup>4</sup> Jerome uses such virulence in his

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 18, 19.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. x. 10, xi. 6.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 7-9.

<sup>4</sup> Farrar's *Lives of the Fathers*, vol. i., p. 169.

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

controversy with Rufinus, that Newman says one would hesitate to call him a saint if the title had not been given to him by the universal verdict of the Church. In later times, Samuel Rutherford, Richard Baxter, and the author of 'Rock of Ages,' all used violent language to their opponents in religious controversy. There is no need to dwell on these unsavoury facts. The moral is plain : controversy is necessary, but not all men are fitted by their temperaments to be controversialists. Many are consumed by a passionate hatred of what they have come to regard as an evil. They forget that evil cannot be overcome by intolerance and invective ; hence they spend their strength in denunciation instead of striving to combat the evil they hate, by setting forth the good which should replace it. Writing of an agitator in the great Corn Law controversy, Carlyle says, ' We could truly wish to see such a mind as his engaged rather in considering what, in his own sphere, could be "done," than what, in his own or other spheres, ought to be destroyed, rather in producing the True, than in mangling and slashing asunder the False.'<sup>1</sup>

Prefixed to one of John Wesley's early controversial publications is a brief address, which

<sup>1</sup> *Review of Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymers.*

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

sums up in an admirable manner the right spirit of the Christian controversialist. He says, 'This is the first time I have appeared in controversy, properly so called. I now tread an unknown path with fear and trembling; fear, not of my adversary, but of myself. I fear my own spirit, lest I fall, where many mightier men have been slain. I never knew one man (or but one) write controversy with what I thought a right spirit. Every disputant seems to think (as every soldier) that he may hurt his opponent as much as he can; nay, that he ought to do his worst to him, or he cannot make the best of his own cause. But ought these things to be? Ought we not to love our neighbour as ourselves? And does a man cease to be our neighbour because he is of a different opinion; nay, and declares himself so to be? Ought we not, for all this, to do to him as we would he should do to us? But do we ourselves love to be exposed, or set in the worst light? Would we willingly be treated with contempt? If not, why do we treat others thus? And yet, who scruples it? Who does not hit every blow he can, however foreign to the merits of the cause? Who, in controversy, casts a mantle of love over the nakedness of his brother? Who keeps steadily and uniformly to the question

## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

without ever striking at the person? Who shows, in every sentence, that he loves his brother only less than truth? I have made a little faint essay towards this. I have a brother who is as my own soul. My desire is in every word I say to look upon Mr. — as in his place, and to speak no tittle concerning the one in any other spirit than I would speak concerning the other.’<sup>1</sup>

When a man has this spirit he may safely plunge into controversy. Such a man will fight only with clean weapons. Is it too much to hope that the time may come when, as Dean Church says, ‘even our most serious controversies, even our great and apparently hopeless controversy with Rome, may be carried on as if in the presence, and under the full knowledge and judgment of the Lord of truth and charity?’<sup>2</sup>

### (c) ST. PAUL AS A CONTROVERSIALIST.

The question has been raised whether St. Paul can be considered to be a safe guide in controversy. Two objections are made to his arguments: one from his use of the Old Testament, the other from his denunciations against his opponents. Both of these must be considered. With regard to the use of the Old Testament, it is objected that he uses texts without any regard

<sup>1</sup> Wesley's *Works*, vol. viii., p. 359.    <sup>2</sup> *Life and Letters*, p. 301.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

to their contexts, and also heaps up proof-texts in a manner which no modern controversialist would adopt.<sup>1</sup> Are we to conclude that he wilfully adopted interpretations to suit his arguments, without any regard to whether they were correct or not? Our reply is that St. Paul was a Pharisee, trained in Rabbinical schools, in which certain interpretations of Scripture were taught. These interpretations were not the result of a scientific exegesis of Scripture, but were traditional and held to be absolutely true. We cannot expect that, in the first century, the interpretation of the Old Testament would be on the same lines as it is in the twentieth century. The Apostle's general character ought to be sufficient to assure us that he believed firmly that his use of the Old Testament was a right one. Further, it must be remembered that the objection can be urged only against a few texts out of a vast number.

In the use of allegory, which was in full vigour at Alexandria in St. Paul's time, the Apostle shows a wise reticence, the only exception of importance being that already alluded to.<sup>2</sup> As a whole, St. Paul's use of the Old Testament was a triumphant vindication of Christianity, for he grasped the true

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. iii. 10-18 ; and note on St. Paul's use of the Old Testament in Sanday and Headlam's *Romans*, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 22 *seq.*



## ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY.

spiritual significance of the Hebrew Scriptures. 'Ye search the Scriptures . . . and ye will not come unto Me,' was the tragedy of Judaism, and is the reason why it still wanders in the desert. These are they, the Apostle saw and said, which bear witness of Him, and so seeing and saying, entered into the Promised Land.

When St. Paul is charged with intellectual intolerance, it is generally because he uttered anathemas against those who preached 'another Gospel.'<sup>1</sup> But it is surely unfair to brand the Apostle with intolerance on such scanty material. When we remember how unwilling he was to lord it over his converts' faith,<sup>2</sup> his deference in giving his opinion on a difficult matter,<sup>3</sup> his generous recognition of the ministry of men, whose names were used as a rallying cry against himself,<sup>4</sup> his sincere rejoicing that Christ was preached, 'even of envy and strife,'<sup>5</sup> we must allow that, even if St. Paul's intellectual temperament was intolerant, as Sabatier says,<sup>6</sup> grace had wrought a wondrous change. Concerning the anathemas, two things should be kept in mind. In the first place, the Apostle is not defending his own opinions, but writes in the full consciousness that he was the

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9; confer also Rom. xvi. 17, 1 Tim. i. 3, vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 12, 25, 40.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. i. 15-18.

<sup>6</sup> *The Apostle Paul*, p. 54.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

guardian of God's revelation. Secondly, St. Paul was not one of those who regarded it as a first duty to keep an open mind. Certain things were to him final, and could not be reopened.

We all have convictions that admit of no question, which it would be treason to our deepest selves even to discuss. Dr. Denney has an admirable note on Gal. i. 8, 9, in which he says, 'I cannot agree with those who disparage this or affect to forgive it, as the unhappy beginning of religious intolerance. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has any conception of a religion without this intolerance. The first commandment is 'Thou shalt have none other gods besides Me,' and that is the foundation of all true religion. As there is only one God, so there can be only one Gospel. If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, or if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away. The man who perverts it is the worst enemy of God and men, and it is not bad temper or narrow-mindedness in St. Paul which explains this vehement language; it is jealousy for God, which has kindled in a soul redeemed by the death of Christ, a corresponding jealousy for the Saviour.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Death of Christ*, p. 110.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ANGER AND THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES.

ST. PAUL lays special stress on the humbler virtues, but he does not regard these as the only duty of the Christian, in the face of wrongdoing. To resent and to resist may be a more sacred duty than to submit. In order, therefore, to maintain 'the delicate equipoise' in which all moral conduct stands, it is necessary to balance the passive virtues with what may be called the self-assertive virtues.

St. Paul plainly teaches that there are occasions on which a Christian ought to feel and show resentment towards evil-doing. The passages in which this teaching is given are few in number, compared with those which warn against all excess and abuse of anger. This lack of emphasis does not imply one-sidedness in Christian morality. As John Stuart Mill has truly said, 'The Gospel

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

always refers to a pre-existing morality, and confines its precepts to the particulars in which that morality was to be corrected or superseded by a higher or wider.'<sup>1</sup>

When we find early Christian teachers eloquent with regard to humility and forbearance, and silent about resentment, we must remember how little need there was to place emphasis on the latter, and how much the former were needed. With regard to St. Paul's teaching, we must also remember that he was himself a man of quick, ardent, and even impetuous character. We see in the Epistle to the Galatians how his whole nature blazed with indignation when he learnt of the evil wrought in the Church by false teachers. He was not himself 'slow to wrath, slow to speak,' and in his teaching we have evidence that the people of his age needed little instruction on the duty of self-assertion.

Scanty as our material is, yet enough may be gathered from St. Paul's own actions, as revealed in the Acts, and from his language in his Epistles, to show that, both by example and precept, he taught a *via media* between a too tame subservience on the one hand and an undue self-assertion on the other.

<sup>1</sup> *On Liberty*, Popular Edition, p. 28.

## THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES.

(a) THE PASSIVE VIRTUES MUST NOT BE ABUSED.

The account of St. Paul's life given in the Acts of the Apostles clearly shows us that his impressive teaching regarding the passive virtues was balanced by an active opposition to wrong-doing, when opposition was needful. The impression we carry away from St. Luke's narrative is that St. Paul was a man full of tact, sympathy, and tenderness ; yet firm, self-reliant, bold in upholding the truth, strenuous in demanding justice for himself. With what dignity he asserted his rights as a Roman citizen at Philippi, and forced the bustling 'prætors' to a sense of their duty. 'They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned,<sup>1</sup> men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison, and do they now cast us out privily? Nay, verily ; but let them come themselves, and bring us out.'<sup>2</sup> Or take that momentous scene at Paphos, when Christianity faced Oriental paganism, the Christian preacher opposing the Magian, and hear the words which poured like lava from the lips of St. Paul : 'O, full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay regards the word *ἀκατακρίτους* as equivalent to 're incognita' in Roman Law.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Or, again, in the Council Chamber in Jerusalem, when Ananias bade those that stood by to smite St. Paul on the mouth, and immediately the words flashed out : ' God shall smite thee, thou whited wall. And sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? ' <sup>1</sup> It is clear that the Apostle, usually so pliant and tender, could, when occasion demanded, be firm as adamant. When principle was involved, he could stand inflexible, even when, as in the quarrel with Barnabas, firmness lost him the companionship of a loved brother. <sup>2</sup>

The same ardent nature glows also in the Epistles. There is the same impatience under injustice, the same burning indignation against evil-doers. With the Judaisers, the men who sought to make the Cross of Christ of none effect, he would make peace on no terms : they were ' dogs,' <sup>3</sup> ' anathema from Christ.' <sup>4</sup> ' There is,' says Mr. R. N. Hutton, ' something positively grim in the Eastern ferocity of the wish expressed

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiii. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> ' Anger is the satellite of reason, the vindicator of desire. For when we long after anything and are opposed in our desire by some one, we are angered at that person, as though we had been wronged : and reason evidently deems that there are just grounds for displeasure in what has happened, in the case of those who, like us, have in the natural course of things to guard our own position.'—John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chap. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

## THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES.

in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 12) against the false brethren who troubled the Church by insisting on the strict Jewish circumcision.'<sup>1</sup> The stern rebuke given to St. Peter was public and convincing: 'If thou, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?'<sup>2</sup> Even the last letters we have from his pen show that the old fires were still burning: 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord will render to him according to his works.'<sup>3</sup>

The texts which support the personal attitude of the Apostle are exceedingly meagre. The most important one contains the injunction, 'Be angry and sin not,'<sup>4</sup> which certainly implies that anger is permissible in a Christian, if duly guarded. Also, when St. Paul says that an ἐπίσκοπος must not be ὀργιλος<sup>5</sup>—that is, he must not be 'soon angry'—he suggests that there are occasions when an overseer of the Church may righteously show anger, although he must be careful not to be hasty in doing so. The impressive manner in which St. Paul speaks of the wrath of God, and the solemn manner in which he warns men not to provoke it, indicates that he regarded 'anger' as

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Essays*, p. 33.

■ Gal. ii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 26.

■ Titus i. 7.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

justifiable under certain circumstances. His preference is undoubtedly for a careful control over all feelings of enmity or resentment, and for leaving offenders to the judgment of God.

(b) In the present day there is a tendency to bring into a right prominence the love of God, and to press home to every human heart, not only that God loves, but that 'God is love.' The all-important fact to us is, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem it ; that 'God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'<sup>1</sup> But our deepening sense of His infinite love ought not to obscure the complementary truth that there is such a thing as the 'wrath of God,' 'the wrath of the Lamb.' We read in the Gospels how the meek and lowly Son of Man was 'moved to indignation ;'<sup>2</sup> how He looked round 'with anger ;'<sup>3</sup> how He entered the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves.<sup>4</sup> It is plain, therefore, that, according to New Testament morality, there are occasions when a righteous man's whole duty does not lie in turning his cheek to the smiter, and suffering whatsoever evil is pleased and able to inflict.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iii. v.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxi. 12.



## THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES.

The author of *Ecce Homo* says that the first impulse, at the sight of vice, is the impulse of hostility and opposition ; ‘to convict it, to detect it, to contend with it, to put it down, is the first and indispensable thing . . . it is not mercy, but treason against injustice, to relent towards vice, so long as it is triumphant and insolent.’<sup>1</sup> ‘Anger,’ says Fuller, ‘is one of the sinews of the soul ; he that wants it hath a maimed mind.’ John Morley even goes so far as to say that active hatred of cruelty, injustice, and oppression is perhaps the main difference between a good man and a bad one.<sup>2</sup> Bishop Paget says of Dean Church : ‘Patient as he was, he could be angry when need came ; angry with a quiet and self-possessed intensity, which made his anger very memorable. The sight of injustice, of strength or wealth presuming on its advantages, of insolence (a word that came from his lips with a peculiar ring and emphasis), called out in him something like the passion which has made men patriots when their people were oppressed : something of that temper which will always make tyranny insecure and persecution hazardous. One felt that many years of quiet self-control must lie behind the power of wielding rightly such a weapon as anger.’ It is

<sup>1</sup> Popular Edition, p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i. p. 196.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

clear that Dean Church had learnt the admonition, 'Be ye angry and sin not.'

On this point a direct conflict emerges between the ethical teaching of Seneca and that of St. Paul.

The idea of the Stoic was *ἀπάθεια* (passionlessness). Anger in his eyes was not a wild plant to be carefully trained, but a poisonous weed to be rooted out. Nothing could be permitted which disturbed the serenity of life. Seneca repudiates the very notion that a wise man should be angry and indignant against moral evil.<sup>1</sup> The gods dwelt in everlasting calm: what higher thing could man desire than to imitate them? This was not St. Paul's idea; his whole life and teaching repudiates such a conception of God, or such conduct on the part of man. In these days of war, when the whole strength of our nation has been roused against the ambition, the cruelty, and the insolent militarism of Germany, we can see more clearly than in times of peace that there are occasions when it is right to be angry; nay, more than that, we feel that, as Christian men, we should be wrong if we did not make a firm stand against the spirit which claims that the powerful alone have rights, and that weak nations must submit to wrong and injustice. We feel it

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar's *Seekers after God*.

## THE SELF-ASSERTIVE VIRTUES.

would be wrong to allow the moral consciousness of the Christian world to be destroyed, and the cruelties and abominations of paganism to triumph over civilisation. There is no shame to our Christianity that we have drawn the sword against the evil which has so long been festering in one of the great nations of the world. Rather than feeling shame, we glory in the uprising of our people, and of those allied with us, to a righteous anger against those who have set at nought the teachings of our Lord and His Apostles.

### (c) WARNINGS AGAINST ABUSE OF 'ANGER.'<sup>1</sup>

As there are occasions when it is right to be angry, there is need to carefully guide and guard it against abuse. 'Be ye angry and sin not.' Gladstone's biographer says of him that 'in native capacity for righteous anger he abounded. The flame soon kindled, and it was no fire of straw, but it did not master him.'<sup>2</sup> This is the Christian ideal: anger is a good servant, but a bad master. Kept well in hand, it may serve many noble ends;

<sup>1</sup> 'Three kinds of anger were distinguished among the Greeks. When anger begins to be roused, it is called *χολή* or *χόλος*. Wrath implies that the memory of the wrong abides, and is represented by *μῆνις*, which is derived from *μένειν*. Rancour, this implies watching a suitable moment for revenge, the Greek word for it is *κότος* from *κεῖσθαι*.' —John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chap. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Morley's *Life*, vol. i., p. 189.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

allowed to master the mind, it assumes forms of sin at once. Hatred, deadly and implacable ; enmity, blind and unforgiving ; malice, cunning and hurtful ; revenge, unscrupulous and merciless : all these are the children of undisciplined anger. Earnestly St. Paul warns against these evils. Among the works of the flesh he places 'enmities, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions.'<sup>1</sup> He bids the Colossians put off anger, wrath, malice, and urges them to put on, as God's elect, 'a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering.'<sup>2</sup> So, likewise, in his teaching regarding relative duties, he urges fathers not to provoke their children to wrath.<sup>3</sup> In dealing with slaves, masters are to forbear threatening.<sup>4</sup> Continually St. Paul and other Christian teachers remind a Christian that he must be on his guard against giving an 'occasion for stumbling.' He is to put no temptation, no evil example, before his fellow-men. In his public life, and in his home life, he must be equally on the watch, remembering Him, who, in the words of St. Peter, 'when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 20.      <sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 8-12.      <sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 4 ; Col. iii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. vi. 9.      <sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 23.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ASCETICISM—TRUE AND FALSE.

**A**SCETICISM holds an important place in the development of historical Christianity, but was not a peculiarly Christian movement.

Although there is a truth in asceticism which is in line with the moral teaching of the Gospel, yet much of the asceticism which asserted itself within the Church came from without.

There have always been persons who have admired, if they have not imitated, men like John the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking; men who from conscientious motives have foregone the innocent pleasures and refinements of social life, and who have found it easier to serve God by suppressing lawful human affections and appetites. At the beginning of the Christian era the Essenes in Palestine attracted considerable attention, as we learn from Josephus and Philo. They represented 'righteousness by works,' in the negative and ascetic sense, by retiring into the monastic life on the shores of the Dead Sea.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Luthardt says<sup>1</sup>: 'They formed a closed order (τάγμα), with strictly regulated conditions of admission and of the order of life. They observed community of goods, abstinence from all luxury and pleasure, and mostly from marriage. They busied themselves with agriculture and peaceful arts, but they kept away from extensive commerce and similar occupations directed to the acquisition of money, and rejected war as well as slavery. Their morality consisted in reverence towards God ; the practice of justice and mercy, and, above all, truthfulness and strict obedience to superiors. The course of their day was filled up with prayer, labour, ablutions, and religious meals. They prayed at dawn of day with their faces towards the sun.'<sup>2</sup> While there is much to admire in Essenism, as thus sketched, its negative morality was at the same time a withdrawal from public life, and without influence upon it. The individual life became all-important, and the moral life took the form of the external practice of religion. It involved a passing from the life of the world into monasticism. The influence of Essenism was felt among the Jews of the Diaspora, and some of the errors combated by St. Paul in the Epistle of the Colossians can be traced to it.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Christian Ethics*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Luthardt, p. 65.

## ASCETICISM.

In the East generally, asceticism had from an early time exerted a powerful fascination over the minds of men. In Phrygia, it was associated with theosophy, and had many followers, who enthusiastically adopted stringent rules for the ordering of human life.

In Alexandria, asceticism was an inheritance from the old Egyptian mysticism, and appeared among the Jewish community in that city through the teaching of Philo, who resolved morality into spirituality, and consequently resolved the moral ideal into the religious practice of an ascetic negation of nature.<sup>1</sup> With so many sources of ascetic teaching pouring their contents into the provinces of the Roman Empire, it was natural that sooner or later St. Paul and other teachers of Christianity would be compelled to define the relation in which the Gospel stood to this powerful and omnipresent rival. The claim of asceticism to be the guide of human life could not be ignored, and the Epistles of St. Paul show that he boldly faced the issue.

It could not be expected that in the fragmentary and occasional character of his writings a full exposition of the subject would be found ; yet, brief as the references are, they show the

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, p. 70.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

masterly power with which the Apostle handled a large and complex ethical subject.

As a preliminary to the examination of St. Paul's teaching it should be clearly understood in what sense the word 'asceticism' is employed. In common speech the term covers a wide variety of faith and practice, and this must be kept in view to avoid confusion. When, for example, one Christian teacher tells us that asceticism is a misapprehension of the genius of Christianity, and another that the Christian view of life is, in the best sense of the word, an ascetic one, it is evident that they are not attaching the same meaning to asceticism. The fact is that the term has two meanings. There is an asceticism which has its root in the necessities of our sinful human nature, and this the New Testament both honours and enjoins.

There is also an asceticism which has its origin in the Eastern idea of the inherent sinfulness of matter, and the consequent necessity for the spiritual man to annihilate it : to this kind of asceticism the New Testament is entirely opposed. From these definitions we gather that there are two forms of asceticism :

(a) The asceticism of dualism, which St. Paul strenuously opposed.



## ASCETICISM.

(*b*) The asceticism of self-discipline, which he enjoins.<sup>1</sup>

### (*a*) THE ASCETICISM OF DUALISM.

This is opposed by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians and in the Pastoral Epistles. The most important passages are : ‘ If ye died to Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch, (all which things are to perish in the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.’<sup>2</sup>

‘ The Spirit saith expressly that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own consciences as with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and acknowledge the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected, if it be

<sup>1</sup> The phrases are Lightfoot's (*Colossians*, p. 105, footnote).

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 20-23.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.'<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible within the limits of this work to dissect all the debatable questions raised by these passages.

Lightfoot regards the heresy condemned as 'incipient gnosticism,' but later scholars are not unanimous on this point. 'There can be,' says Bartlet, 'little question that the Colossian errors were in the main due to ideas already at work in the local Judaism, and were not at all what is usually styled gnostic in origin.'<sup>2</sup> He traces them to two sources—one Jewish, the other pagan; the Jewish being partly Essenism, partly Therapeutic doctrine, and partly the type of thought found in the Testament of Solomon. It is clear that the Colossians were swayed in the direction of an ascetic motive, bound up with a conception of Salvation, which was devoid of any idea of the necessity for moral effort in human life. Life was to be directed by petty prohibitions: 'Handle not, nor taste, nor touch,' and both marriage and the use of meat were forbidden. The condemnation of St. Paul is almost startling in its severity; but he does more than denounce—he shows the false root from which this asceticism

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1-5, see also Titus i. 13, 14.    <sup>2</sup> *Apostolic Age*, p. 186.

## ASCETICISM.

sprang ; and in both the Colossian Epistle and in the Pastorals states the grounds upon which to-day, no less than in the first century, a false asceticism stands condemned.

(1) He speaks with scorn of the prohibitions with regard to food. All these perish, as they are used. They are not the chief concern of the Christian ; the free man in Christ cannot be under the yoke of a system whose supreme concern is with eating and drinking.

(2) In 1 Tim. St. Paul meets the advocates of asceticism on their own ground, and overthrows the theory that matter is evil in itself, by claiming that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected ; but adds the religious spirit in which God's gifts are to be received by man : they are to be received 'with thanksgiving,' they are sanctified to God's service through the word of God and prayer. As Bishop South says, in his sermon on 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, there should be 'grace' before meat and 'grace' after meat. It need hardly be said that St. Paul's language does not permit licence when he advocates liberty. Elsewhere he lays down limitations, which should be remembered. All God's gifts are good, though some men constantly abuse them : others, for the sake of example, may abstain from using them.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

The point to be borne in mind is, that abstention is not a merit in itself; its value depends upon the rightness of the motive in abstaining. The terrible prevalence of drunkenness in one country may make abstinence from alcoholic drink a duty; in another country, wholly sober, the demand to abstain might merit the rebuke from St. Paul: 'Drink will not commend us to God: neither, if we drink, are we the worse: nor, if we drink not, are we the better.' The Apostle's advice to Timothy, 'to be no longer a drinker of water,' was possibly as much a protest against false asceticism of this kind as a counsel for the benefit of his health.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of true asceticism is expressed in the words: 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to desire wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.'<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, it is not safe to advance.

(3) The asceticism of dualism is not only philosophically false, it is practically useless. 'It is not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.'<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere St. Paul does indeed allow 'bodily exercise,' meaning physical asceticisms, such as are referred to in the preceding verses, but

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The rendering of the R.V.: this is disputed by many scholars. Hort suspects an early corruption of the text.

## ASCETICISM.

he adds, 'is profitable for a little.' This slight concession leaves his general judgment unaltered. Tried by results, asceticism is a failure ; it makes a 'show of wisdom' in its severity to the body, but it is powerless to subdue the lusts of the flesh. If this is thought to be too severe a judgment, it is sufficient to point to the history of monasticism, which has many dark pages. It should, however, be remembered that when St. Paul speaks of the 'flesh' he means not merely the body, but the whole unregenerate personality—the entire unreserved self that thinks, feels, wills, and desires, apart from God ; and his words declare the impotence of any ordinances of men to keep that self in subjection. Asceticism may remove the opportunity for gratifying some particular sensual desire, but it does not change the sinful heart. Uncleanness or drunkenness may be cast out, but pride and uncharitableness may fill the vacant place, and the last state of the man is no better—perhaps it may be even worse.

(4) Finally, asceticism in its spirit and method is alien to the genius of Christianity. 'If,' says St. Paul, 'ye died to Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?'<sup>1</sup> From the Christian

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 20.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

point of view there is a distinct loss in asceticism, even as there was a loss to the Galatians, when, after they had known God as revealed in Christ, they turned from a spiritual service to the weak and beggarly elements, from which they had been delivered, and desired to be in bondage again.<sup>1</sup> Christianity works from within outwards ; it reforms the life by renewing the heart ; it overcomes the world, not by flying from it, but through the new life of the Holy Spirit. It makes men partakers of the life of Christ and to be sharers in His victory over sin. 'Handle not, nor taste, nor touch,' says asceticism. 'Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,' says Christianity. History must judge between them.

### (b) THE ASCETICISM OF SELF-DISCIPLINE.

While a false asceticism stands condemned, there is yet a true asceticism which finds a place in the Christian life. Both our Lord and His apostles appeal for self-denial, and even for self-mortification, on the part of believers. Their appeals are often a stumbling-block to men of earnestness and integrity, who think that the goal of perfection may be reached by the self-development of man ; and who do not see the necessity

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 9.

## ASCETICISM.

for restrictions, which might retard or prevent self-development.

It is urged that consecration to a definite end is sufficient without renunciation. This sounds attractive, but as stated, implies that there is an opposition between the two, whereas they are complementary ; consecration involves self-denial, and the goal of perfection cannot be reached by the path of self-development alone. Such an idea ignores the fact of sin, and this fact changes the whole character of the problem. 'The self, which we seek to develop here and now, is a sinful self, and incapable, therefore, till its sin is overcome, of any true development at all.'<sup>1</sup> Development is still necessary to reach the goal of perfection, but stern experience tells us that it is attainable only by the way of discipline and rigorous self-control.

In self-control (ἐγκράτεια) St. Paul sees a characteristic of 'the fruit of the Spirit.'<sup>2</sup> This word, as used by St. Paul, is said by Findlay 'to cover the whole range of moral discipline, and concerns every sin and passion of our nature.' The 'temperate' man of the New Testament is he who, not only abstains from excess in the use of strong drink (he does that of course), but holds himself well in hand, and keeps all the steeds that

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth's *Christian Character*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 23.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

are yoked to the chariot of life well bridled and well bitted. The tongue, the hand, the foot, the eye, the temper, the tastes, the affections, are all made to feel the curb of self-control. In the Epistle in which St. Paul proclaims the vanity of a false asceticism, he says, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry.'<sup>1</sup> To the Romans, he writes, 'If by the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.'<sup>2</sup> To the Galatians, 'They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof.'<sup>3</sup>

These words imply the gravity of the problem which sin has created. They contain nothing that is unreal, they are not merely rhetorical, but owe their origin to a resolute facing of the facts of human life. They do not discourage the attempts of men to lead a full life, but they point the necessary path to it. No man ever yearned for perfection more earnestly than St. Paul did, but he never forgot that only with 'toil of heart and knees and hands' can the 'path upward' be won and the 'toppling crags' scaled. When he said, 'I buffet my body and bring it into bondage,'<sup>4</sup> he

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 24.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. ix. 27.



## ASCETICISM.

did not imply that he did this because he delighted in austerity for its own sake, but lest, after he had preached to others, he himself might be rejected. True Christianity welcomes all self-discipline, but recognises no 'merit' in austerity.

### ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY IN THE CHURCH.

Having considered true and false asceticism, it may be instructive to glance very briefly at the historic development of the ascetic element in the Christian Church. *The Shepherd of Hermas* is the first distinctly Christian work to manifest an ascetic tendency in its ethics. In it, the moral element in the Christian life is strongly emphasised, and the exhortations given have a 'legal' and even an ascetic character.<sup>1</sup> Abstinence is one of the four principal virtues. Continence in marriage is enjoined, and blessings are promised to the continent, and to the bodies of virgins.<sup>2</sup> In the whole work there is 'the first unconscious divergence from the strict line of the Pauline doctrine of justification.'<sup>3</sup> This movement was strengthened by the influence of Alexandrian Judaism, based upon the Apocrypha; and by heathen influences, springing from

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt's *History of Christian Ethics*, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Acta, 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Luthardt, p. 127.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

the moral philosophy of the time. A further cause of the rise of asceticism is given in Dr. Oakesmith's *Religion of Plutarch*; he says,<sup>1</sup> 'Any sanction which imaginative piety, or legendary authority can lend to Virtue is credited, not because it makes Virtue natural, intelligible, and human, but because it places it on a pedestal beyond the reach of unaided mortal effort, and thus compels a still more determined recourse to emotional and supernatural sanctions, in order to ensure her fruitful cultivation. . . . Hence that conception of saintliness which the world owes to Catholic Christianity, a type of character which, while maintaining a marvellous purity of life, is devoid of that robust intelligence without which purity runs into asceticism ; which carries virtue to such an extravagant pitch that its result may be more disastrous than vice, inasmuch as the latter may serve morality by demonstrating the repulsiveness of iniquity, while the former tends to evil by exhibiting the impossibility of goodness.' All these influences being at work in the Church, it is no wonder that asceticism made rapid progress.

The ancient Egyptian monasticism found many imitators, and spread in all directions. The Cap-

<sup>1</sup> Pages 2, 3.

## ASCETICISM.

padocian Fathers introduced the monastic system into Asia, and from their time onwards, the movement grew with the growth, and strengthened with the strength of Christianity. Of the austerities practised by the votaries of asceticism, in order to commend themselves to God, it is needless to speak. The story can be read, in all its repulsiveness, in the pages of Gibbon and Lecky.

How are we further to explain the sudden, and all but universal, lapse of the Church from the simplicity of its early faith?

How came the religion taught by our Lord and by His Apostles to be changed into the extravagance of the pillar-saints of the fifth century?

A great impulse came doubtless from the truth that self-restraint is necessary in any human life, which is being perfected for God. The early apostles realised that in a world of sin and filled with temptations, there was a call for renunciation. They strove to respond with all seriousness to the call of Jesus to take up His cross and follow Him. The bias given to their minds was strengthened by the awful laxity and immorality of the times in which they lived. It has been said that the world was never so ingeniously and exhaustively wicked as it was in the first century of the Christian

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

era. It is no wonder that face to face with extravagance of sin, good men fell into extravagance of rigid life ; and asked themselves whether they would not keep closer to God by withdrawing themselves from the world. To reinforce their thoughts was the cherished expectation of the coming of the Lord ; what were home and pleasure, and business, when at any moment the Judge might be at the door.

‘ *Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt ; vigilemus  
Ecce minaciter, imminet arbiter, ille supremus.*’<sup>1</sup>

These words must have expressed the thought of many minds, before the monk of Clugny poured out his deathless song.

Finally, a movement towards asceticism, Eastern in its origin but almost world-wide in its reach, lent its aid from without. ‘The contest of Christianity,’ says Milman, ‘with the Eastern religions must be traced in their reaction upon the new religion of the West. By their treacherous alliance, they probably operated more extensively to the detriment of the Evangelic religion than Paganism by its open opposition. Asiatic influences have worked more completely into the body

<sup>1</sup> ‘The world is very evil—The times are waxing late—  
Be sober and keep vigil—The Judge is at the gate.’

## ASCETICISM.

and essence of Christianity than any other foreign elements ; and it is by no means improbable that tenets, which had their origin in India, have for many centuries predominated in, or materially affected, the Christianity of the Western world.'<sup>1</sup>

The ascetic movement has been variously judged. Gibbon and Lecky both regard it as a hideous excrescence on the body of Christianity. Other writers, like Dean Church, while admitting that there was much in it that repels, refuse to regard it as wholly evil. Dean Church says, 'When we remember what were the enormous, blind, intractable forces on the other side, in the days when it arose, of fierce, endless, unrestrained sensuality ; it seems as if nothing but such an enthusiasm, as inconsiderate and unmeasured, could balance or swing back, on a scale necessary for the progress of the world, the tremendous, ever-renewed, and accumulating pressure in favour of self-indulgence. The severity of the early Church was a rebound, and strong medicine, against the ruinous dissoluteness of the decaying Empire, which no remedy, but an heroic one, could stay. . . . All these histories of monks, which lend themselves so easily to our sarcasm, and seem to us almost as disgusting as immorality

<sup>1</sup> *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 31.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

itself, may be viewed in another way, as the crude, clumsy, distorted, absurd sketches of beginners, who yet have the heart and boldness to try to copy a great and difficult model.' Yet Dean Church admits that the ascetic movement ended in failure. It failed, because it was based on a false philosophy ; it failed, because it ignored and defied the facts of human nature ; it failed, because it never comprehended God. Healthy human nature protests against a doctrine which teaches self-denial for its own sake, and pronounces misery to be more acceptable in God's sight than happiness.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

**W**HEN our Lord prayed for His disciples, 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,'<sup>1</sup> He looked forward to the time when His followers would live in association with other men, and be exposed to temptations as other men. They would be transformed from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light, from death to life, but would necessarily be affected by the social conditions in which they lived. As the Gospel spread, the new converts would be exposed to similar experiences. They would live their lives under the new conditions of discipleship, but surrounded by the customs and temptations with which they had been familiar in the past. The mingling of the new life with the old brought about important questions. 'How ought a Christian slave to behave towards a heathen master?' If a dispute arose between Christian

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 15.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

men, how was it to be settled? Was it necessary to carry the case to the heathen courts of justice? If a wife became a Christian, must she separate from her heathen husband? What course must be taken when at a social feast a Christian was offered meat which had been sacrificed to an idol? These were not questions of right or wrong, but of moral expediency. Different opinions might be conscientiously held regarding the answers to them, and differences of opinion might involve dissensions in the Christian brotherhood. It was of inestimable value to the early Church to have the guidance of the master-mind of St. Paul, not merely to lay down rules for special cases, but to indicate the spirit in which all cases of conscience should be met. As an exhibition of the spirit by which men should be guided, we may take as examples questions which arose at Rome and Corinth.

In Rome there were some Church members who judged it right to mark certain days by special observances,<sup>1</sup> and others who abstained wholly from flesh meat and wine.<sup>2</sup> Others had no such scruples: they had faith to eat all things, they deemed every day alike. Thus there were the materials for division into two parties, the strong

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 2, 21.



## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

and the weak. Had they been contented to carry out their convictions, and to exercise mutual forbearance, no injury would have been caused to the Church. But when the strong despised the weak, and the weak passed judgment on the strong ; or, against their conscience, did things they held wrong in order to avoid contempt : then there was danger to the unity of the brotherhood.

At Corinth, the question, though similar in principle, was different in origin. The opposing parties—the weak and the strong—were divided on the question of eating meat which had been offered to an idol. To the weak, the eating of such meat was an act of idolatry ; the strong replied, ‘ An idol is nothing : why then should we not eat ? ’<sup>1</sup> In Corinth, as in Rome, the liberty of the strong was in danger of becoming a stumbling-block to the weak, the brethren for whose sake Christ died. St. Paul deals vigorously with each case ; and in such a way as to elevate the purely local and temporal difficulty into a position from which universal and abiding principles may be learnt.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4 ; 1 Cor. x. 19.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

### (a) ST. PAUL'S TEACHING TO THE WEAK.

He tells them their scruples are a mistake ; but nevertheless, until their consciences are enlightened, they must respect their decisions. His judgment is wholly on the side of the strong. When he says, 'We that are strong,'<sup>1</sup> he associates himself with them. 'We know,' he says, 'that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one,'<sup>2</sup> and therefore all things are clean.'<sup>3</sup> 'I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself.'<sup>4</sup> 'Meat will not commend us to God ; neither if we eat not, are we the worse ; nor if we eat, are we the better.'<sup>5</sup> He maintained that the root of the weakness with regard to eating was a weak faith. It was a failure to recognise that the soul, which has committed itself to Christ, is free from all laws, except those which are involved in responsibility to Him.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, though a man be wrong, his conscience must be obeyed. Enlightenment cannot follow disobedience.

From the treatment of the weak by St. Paul two moral principles of great value may be evolved :

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 1.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 20.    <sup>4</sup> Rom. xiv. 14.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 8.    <sup>6</sup> Denney, *Expositor's G.T.*, vol. ii., p. 700.

## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

(a) Over-scrupulousness, so far from being a virtue, is a weakness to be got rid of ; it is a sign of defective faith, and of imperfect knowledge. It shows a narrow outlook, and may become a disease. ‘Fatty degeneration of the conscience,’ as it has been wittily called,<sup>1</sup> is an ailment to which a certain type of religious person is peculiarly liable. So long as they regard their super-sensitiveness with Pharisaic self-complacency, there is small hope of their recovery.

(b) Yet St. Paul asserts unhesitatingly the supremacy even of a weak conscience ; it ought to be enlightened, but until it is it must be obeyed. ‘May we not,’ says Newman, ‘look for a blessing through obedience, even to an erroneous system, and a guidance, even by means of it, out of it? . . . I have always contended that obedience even to an erring conscience was the way to gain light, and that it mattered not where a man began, so that he began on what came to hand, and in faith.’<sup>2</sup> Such also was St. Paul’s belief. He is sure that the weak are wrong, but he is equally sure that they must follow their conscience. This view is justified by experience. ‘A wounded

<sup>1</sup> This expression occurs in *Isabel Carnaby*, but is used by a writer in the *Spectator* several years before (December 26th, 1891).

<sup>2</sup> *Apologia*, p. 206.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

conscience,' says Fuller, 'can unparadise Paradise itself,' 'Others persuaded,' writes Laud in his diary, 'but my own conscience loudly forbade me. . . . Ah, how much better had I suffered martyrdom with Thy protomartyr upon his commemoration day, than done the pleasure of two faithless, careless friends. . . .' I am not stoned for my sins, but stoned by them.'<sup>1</sup> 'Conscience, conscience,' said Juba; 'yes, certainly, once I had a conscience. Yes, and once I had a bad chill, and went about chattering and shivering; and once I had a game leg, and then I went limping; and so, you see, I once on a time had a conscience. O yes, I have had many consciences before now—white, black, yellow, and green; they were all bad, but they are all gone, and now I have none.' That is the result of treating conscience as a bad adviser, to be silenced, and got rid of as quickly as possible.

### (b) ST. PAUL'S TEACHING TO THE STRONG.

It has already been shown that St. Paul's sympathies were with the strong. They were in the right. He had himself taught, 'All things are lawful for me,' but he had expressly limited the

<sup>1</sup> Mozley's *Essays, Historical and Theological*, vol. i., p. 146. The sin to which the extract refers was the celebration of a marriage of a divorced woman by Laud soon after his ordination.

## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

practical application of this principle of Christian freedom, 'but not all things are expedient.' The law of Christian love must be allowed to be heard, and expediency must be carefully considered.

This expediency is of two kinds :

(1) Expediency in our own interests : 'All things are lawful for me ; but I will not be brought under the power of any.'<sup>1</sup>

(2) Expediency in the interests of others : 'All things are lawful, but all things edify not.'<sup>2</sup>

The first represents the common-sense view of expediency. Liberty is not to be so used that it changes into bondage. The moment any indulgence gains the upper hand, however innocent it may be, it is time to make a stand against it, and to say plainly, 'I will not be brought into bondage by it.' An example of this is seen in cigarette smoking. It is innocent in itself, but how quickly it may develop into a pernicious habit, and become a bondage. No man should allow himself to become a slave to any habit. He ought to be able, if necessary, to throw it aside. This was St. Paul's own practice, 'all things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 23.

<sup>3</sup> The whole subject of liberty and expediency is treated by Findlay in the *Monthly Interpreter*, vol. i., p. 292.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Of expediency in the interests of others, St. Paul has many things to say. Liberty is great, but love is greater. The burden of his message, whether to Rome, or Corinth, is, 'Take heed lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to the weak.'<sup>1</sup> These words show St. Paul's practical moral sanity. He recognises that the strong must live, side by side, with those who have neither their strength nor their insight. The true, strong man in Christ must think of others. He is not to be a stumbling-block, or occasion of falling to his fellow-men. His actions are to make for peace, and for the edification of others. So far does St. Paul press this principle, that he teaches that liberty must be sacrificed if need be: 'If because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love . . . it is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.'<sup>2</sup> He lays no yoke that he will not gladly bear himself. 'If meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble.'<sup>3</sup> Does this bear too heavily on the strong? Would it not be better to stand up boldly and show that the weak are wrong? Certainly this would be right in some cases. But

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 15, 21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 13.

## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

each case must be dealt with as it occurs, with a clear view of what is at stake. The threefold motive which influenced St. Paul's action must have weight with every Christian man : the peace of the Church, the claims of brotherhood, and the readiness to sacrifice self for others. We are members one of another, each individual life is a part of the whole life of the community to which we belong. We must follow after things whereby we may edify one another.<sup>1</sup> The tie of obligation is strengthened, when the Apostle reminds the strong of their brotherhood with the weak. They may be ignorant and foolish, but they have this claim at least, they are of the same household of faith. The spirit to sacrifice self for others must also influence our attitude. 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves . . . for Christ also pleased not Himself.'<sup>2</sup> This is the supreme motive, and for every man whose heart lies open to its appeal, it is the conclusion of the whole matter.

### (c) ST. PAUL'S TEACHING ON 'JUDGING.'

This is addressed to both weak and strong. To the weak he writes : 'But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother?'<sup>3</sup> Then turning to the strong,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

‘Thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother, for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.’<sup>1</sup>

The question naturally arises, What does St. Paul mean by ‘judging’? ‘To think is to compare,’ says Prof. Hoffding, in his *Elementary Logic*, but comparison involves judgment. If this be so, we cannot think of others, without judging others. To think of others is no sin, since it is impossible not to do so; what, then, is the boundary-line, where judgment, which is merely an integral element of thought, passes from a purely psychological phenomenon into sin? What element in the judgment is it which constitutes sin? The answer to these questions can be gathered from St. Paul’s words. The ‘judging,’ which he condemns, is not the thought we give to others in the spirit of brotherly love; but thought which is marked by censoriousness in the weak, as they judge the strong; and by contemptuousness in the strong, as they judge the weak. In both cases there is a breach of charity. The exercise of a

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 10-13; see also verses 3 and 4.



## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

larger liberty provokes the condemnation of men, whose principles are strict while their outlook is narrow ; and on the other hand, men are tempted to regard with scorn the prejudices of the over-scrupulous.

How much of the bitterness which separates Christian men might be avoided, if we could always bear in mind that we, each one, have a Master, to whom we must give account. How much sweeter life would be if we could grasp the important truth, that the chief thing is, not what we think of each other, but what Christ thinks of us. Often in our judgments upon others we forget that He said : ' Judge not, that ye be not judged.'<sup>1</sup> Are we not also taking the judgment out of His hands when we judge each other in a spirit of either censoriousness or contemptuousness ?

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 1.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

#### (a) SOCIAL ORDER.

ST. PAUL, as a Roman citizen, upheld the great principle of Roman Law, viz., social order. His language is strong and clear in his advice : ' Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. He that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God, and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.'<sup>1</sup>

In writing to Timothy, ' I exhort,' he says, ' first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men : for kings and all that are in high place, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.'<sup>2</sup> It must have required the courage which springs from strong convictions to write as St. Paul did to the Roman Church, which contained a large Jewish element. Obedience to the higher powers must have been exceedingly difficult,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

and St. Paul does not ask for it ; but he *does* ask for subjection or submission on the ground that all lawful authority has its source in God. His words open too large a subject for discussion in these pages. Numberless questions arise from them, such as, Is it never permissible to rebel? How can it be right to submit to a tyrannical or irreligious ruler? How can the authority of such a ruler be described as an ordinance of God? It is not necessary to discuss these questions; they have been in the past the subjects of vehement controversy, and might find a place in 'cases of conscience.' There may be occasions when submission to an earthly authority involves rebellion against God, and in such cases the higher authority of God claims submission first ; this was an old Apostolic rule.<sup>1</sup> But such cases are only occasional, and are not covered by St. Paul's advice. What he desires to impress upon his readers is the spirit which yields ready submission to lawful authority. The Jews were always noted for a rebellious spirit against pagan Rome, and in St. Paul's days were constantly raising tumults against their rulers. It is this spirit he deprecates when he teaches submission. There was a better way than rebellion, and this is indicated in the pas-

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 19, v. 29.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

sage quoted from 1 Tim. Christians must pray for their rulers. 'Prayers,' says Bishop Bilson, 'must be made for kings and all that are in authority, in order that they may discharge their duties according to God's ordinance, which is, that their subjects by their help and means may lead an honest, godly, and quiet life; godliness and honesty being the chiefest ends of our prayers, and effects of their powers.'<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt of the wisdom of St. Paul's precepts, in the best interests of the infant Church. He had himself been the subject of persecution for alleged rebellion against Cæsar,<sup>2</sup> and knew how easily the Roman power could be aroused to hostility when civil order was threatened.

### (b) BENEVOLENCE.

A distinction was made by Kant between duties of perfect obligation and duties of imperfect obligation. The former are duties obligatory at all times, and under all circumstances; such, for example, as the Ten Commandments. The latter are duties which cannot be exactly formulated, but yet they are duties which every good man is expected to perform. Christianity does

<sup>1</sup> *On Christian Subjection*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 7.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

not make any such distinction. It does not attempt to regulate specific acts of life, but says, 'Be ye perfect.' Specific acts and abstentions are not so important as 'the spiritual principle' which influences conduct. What a man 'is' is more important than what a man 'does.' This makes the spiritual principle, which is prominent in St. Paul's ethics, of supreme importance. Where there is union with Christ, the whole conduct is influenced in a moral direction, and all actions have a higher ethical value than they have if done in obedience to a code of laws, however exhaustive. When St. Paul teaches almsgiving, it is not because it was regarded as a virtue in the Old Testament, but because it was a natural fruit of Christ's presence in the Christian life. His chief aim was to form character in his converts by teaching them to be imitators of Christ. They were to be dominated by the Christ spirit until Christ was formed in them.<sup>1</sup> The sorrow which St. Paul often expresses in his Epistles was chiefly caused by actions which showed that his converts had fallen short of the high standard expected of those who were 'in Christ.' His expectation was that all virtues would blossom more abundantly in lives that were uplifted by union with Christ ; and

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 19.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

all duties would be more cheerfully performed. The working of the Spirit would not only make lives purer, but would promote an outflowing of kindly feeling and generosity towards all in need.

Much space is given in St. Paul's Epistles to the duty of benevolence, as one might expect from one who had the mind of Christ.

It was no new duty to Jewish converts, for later Judaism had given an important place to almsgiving in the life of a pious Jew. The Deuteronomic code enjoined, 'Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor.'<sup>1</sup> The later priest code made special provision for the needy.<sup>2</sup> In the Apocrypha, almsgiving is exalted to such a position that alms combined with fasting is regarded as a means for obtaining forgiveness of sins.<sup>3</sup> The precepts were excellent, but the motives were not always as worthy. Good deeds were to be done to obtain favour, with God or with man, and were not closely connected with the sanctification of the disposition. The custom of giving alms in public provoked a stern rebuke from our Lord.<sup>4</sup> He taught that almsgiving was a matter between man and God, and not a matter for public display in

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xix. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Tobit iv. 11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vi. 2, 4.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

order to gain popular applause. His whole life was the manifestation of the spirit from which true benevolence naturally flows. That St. Paul had caught the spirit of his Master we may gather from his address to the Ephesian elders, in which he quotes words of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'<sup>1</sup>

The importance attached to benevolence by St. Paul is illustrated not merely by specific commands, such as the charge to the Roman Christians to 'communicate to the necessities of the saints,'<sup>2</sup> but by his activity in promoting works of charity.

In the Acts, we are told that, when a famine was impending, the disciples at Antioch determined to send relief to their Judæan brethren, and selected Barnabas and Saul to convey their gifts to the elders.<sup>3</sup> In the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul relates the decision of the older Apostles to send him and Barnabas on a mission to the Gentiles, and adds, 'only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.'<sup>4</sup> This zeal had important results, for it led St. Paul to organize a relief fund for the poor saints at Jerusalem in the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 35.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 13.    <sup>3</sup> Acts xi. 29, 30.    <sup>4</sup> Gal. ii. 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

vinces which he had visited, and in which he had founded Churches. It is in connection with this effort that we have most of the Apostle's teaching upon benevolence, teaching which has influenced all future generations of Christians.

It must first be noted that St. Paul does not lay down any rules as to the scale of Christian giving. There is no mention of a tithe, as we might expect from one brought up in Jewish customs.

The principle he lays down is : ' Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity ; for God loveth a cheerful giver.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he enjoins regular giving ; for he gave orders to the Churches of Galatia and Corinth as follows : ' Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper.'<sup>2</sup> This order was given in order to avoid a special effort when he was present, which would be merely spasmodic generosity, or a tribute to the Apostle's personal influence. Amongst all the Churches, St. Paul singled out those of Macedonia as examples to be followed by others. The root from which their benevolence grew was a strong one. ' First they gave their own selves to the Lord.'<sup>3</sup> Following up their personal dedication, they gave ' Accord-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 5.



## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

ing to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord.'<sup>1</sup> They were in material things poor, but 'their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.'<sup>2</sup>

The whole passage is a splendid tribute to the power of Christ to lift the benevolence in the natural man to a higher level, as a manifestation of Christian life ; and St. Paul goes on to show that a generous spirit, manifest in deeds of kindness, shows thanksgiving to God and gives Him glory. It is a proof of holy obedience to the spirit of the Gospel. It draws closely the bonds of love uniting Christian brethren. These purposes were doubtless in St. Paul's mind when he organized his great relief scheme. All Christians were to be united in one body: all the other members of the body must help, if one member suffered. This strong clear teaching of St. Paul had much influence upon the future conduct of Christians, and contributed greatly towards the union of all the Churches in one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. When much of St. Paul's dogmatic teaching was lost sight of in the controversies of succeeding ages, the sense of brotherhood remained, and saved the Church from falling into unconnected fragments.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 2.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

St. Paul's teaching of benevolence was not confined to care for the poor saints. From his own position of personal independence he was able to lay down the duties of the members of a church to maintain their ministers, without exposing himself to the charge of self-seeking.

In writing to the Galatians he says : ' Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.' <sup>1</sup> The importance of this duty is impressed in very marked language. If it is neglected, God is mocked. ' Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' <sup>1</sup> Although St. Paul refused help from some Churches, yet he gladly accepted it from the Philippian Church, and he speaks in warm terms of their generosity. ' Not,' he says, ' that I seek for the gift, but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account.' <sup>2</sup> How many a minister of Christ in the present day seeks for fruit of his ministry in the generosity of his people, and seeks in vain. It is a remarkable feature in the Christianity of to-day, that, while large sums can be collected for organs, stained-glass windows, and decorations, yet there is the greatest difficulty in raising funds for the ministry, and often even for the necessary expenses of maintaining the ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 17.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

services of the church. People who have no hesitation in spending large sums on luxuries and pleasures, when they attend church, seem to become suddenly poor, and can only find the smallest coin to contribute to the offering, which is presented to the Lord for the service of His Church. Although there are splendid exceptions, many Churchmen excuse their meagre offerings on the ground that the Church is rich, and does not need help. This plea is persisted in, although it has been shown that a large percentage of benefices have endowments quite inadequate to maintain an incumbent, and often the word 'living' is a mere mockery. In any case, ought the generosity of our ancestors to be pleaded as a reason for setting aside the teaching of our Lord and of St. Paul, that the maintenance of the ministry is one of the duties of a Christian? Not only does the special duty of generosity towards the ministry need restatement, but also the whole subject of Christian benevolence, on the principle laid down by St. Paul, that it is the natural expression of Christian love. He does not advocate community of goods. The communism, which is described in the early chapters of the Acts, does not appear in his writings, and, so far as we know, did not spread beyond Jerusalem. He is satisfied by stating, 'In all

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

things I gave you an example, how that so labouring ye ought to help the weak.'<sup>1</sup>

In the present day, the poor laws have made provision for those in destitute circumstances ; and frequently, contributions towards the rates are pleaded as a reason for withholding charity. It cannot be impressed too often that such contributions are not 'charity.' They cannot take the place of the benevolence which St. Paul preached and practised. What we are compelled to give is not the measure of what we ought to 'will' to give. Christ's poor are always with us, and Christ's spirit must ever give form to our benevolence.

Although St. Paul's teaching is so impressive regarding almsgiving, yet he carefully guarded against indiscriminate benevolence. He commanded that children and even grandchildren should undertake the care of widows ; by so doing they would show piety in their own family and requite their parents. Failure to provide for the wants of indigent members of a family is declared to be a denial of the faith, and proves a man to be worse than an unbeliever.<sup>2</sup> Minute directions are laid down for the guidance of those who ministered to the widows supported by the Church. None are to be inscribed on the roll

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 35.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. v. 8.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

until they have passed threescore years, having been the wife of one man, well-reported for good works, hospitality, and service. The Church was not to be burdened by supporting young widows, or those who had relatives capable of maintaining them.<sup>1</sup> The principles laid down by St. Paul can readily be applied in the present day ; not to limit benevolence, but to secure that it is applied where it is most likely to have value.

### (c) PURITY.

The low moral tone of the Græco-Roman world in St. Paul's time is illustrated abundantly in the Epistles. Contact with the East had led to deplorable immorality, which was eating like a disease into both Roman and Provincial life. The Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians prove how keenly St. Paul realised the impurities which stained the lives of the people of Rome and Corinth.

The latter city had 'an unenviable fame for its licentiousness, fostered by the local cult of Aphrodite, which was not only on an enormous scale, but also on Oriental rather than on Greek lines, making vice part of the religious life.'<sup>2</sup> In writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul mentions certain

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim v. 3-16.

<sup>2</sup> Bartlett's *The Apostolic Age*, p. 130.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

classes of evildoers, who were excluded from the kingdom of Christ and God ; and says : ' Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them ; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of.'<sup>1</sup> In like manner he bids the Colossians mortify their lusts, in which they had walked aforetime, when they lived in these things.<sup>2</sup>

On another occasion he states that if Christians were to avoid the companionship of fornicators, they would have to go out of the world.<sup>3</sup> With such an evil environment, it must have been exceedingly difficult for the converts from heathenism to maintain the high moral standard required by their new faith. There was need of plain speaking, and of clear leading, and both of these they found in St. Paul. He was himself a man of remarkably pure life ; but wonderfully alive to the dangers which beset the new converts. The sins which he condemns most severely are those which are generally described as ' the sins of the flesh ;' they form a dark list in St. Paul's writings.

*πορνεία* (fornication) stands first among the works of the flesh. It was especially condemned for the following reasons :—

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. v. 10.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

(a) It was a profanation that any one should take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot.<sup>1</sup>

(b) It is a sin against a man's own body. 'Every sin,' he says, 'that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.'<sup>2</sup>

μοιχεία (adultery), the word is not found in St. Paul's epistles, but the noun μοιχός<sup>3</sup> and the verb μοιχεύειν<sup>4</sup> both occur.

ἀκαθαρσία (uncleanness), is found in close proximity to πορνεία.

ἀσέλγεια (lasciviousness).<sup>5</sup> Both Lightfoot and Ellicott translate this word 'wantonness.' 'A man may be ἀκάθαρτος and hide his own sin; he does not become ἀσελγής, until he shocks public decency.'<sup>6</sup> In classical Greek, the word was associated with insolent or violent conduct. In the New Testament, the prominent idea is sensuality.

πάθος (passion), means lustfulness, and implies a disposition towards lust, *morbum libidinis*.<sup>7</sup>

Still darker forms of impurity are expressed in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 22, xiii. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xiii. 13; Gal. v. 19; Eph. iv. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> Bengel.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

the words *μαλακός* and *ἀρσενοκοίτης*, which show the utmost depths of depravity.<sup>1</sup>

All these sins spring from 'evil desire,' and were dealt with unsparingly. Christians are to mortify them. They are to remember that such sins close the door of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another class of sins, which are branded as breaches of Christian purity, were closely associated with the social life of the Greeks in St. Paul's time, they are :—

*μέθη*—drunkenness, R.V. (Gal. v. 21).

*ἄσωτία*—riot, R.V. (Eph. v. 18). Frequently an accompaniment of *μέθη*.

*κῶμοι*<sup>2</sup>—revellings, R.V. (Gal. vi. 21).

But St. Paul was not content with denouncing the sins of impurity. He gives positive reasons why purity should be manifest in every Christian life.

(a) All Christians are called to be 'saints.'<sup>3</sup> They must walk worthily of their calling.

(b) They are united to Christ. 'The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord ; and the Lord for the body. Know ye not that your

<sup>1</sup> On the prevalence of these sins in the highly civilised cities of the Roman world see Rom. i. 27, in Scripture ; and Horace's *Satires*, in profane literature.

<sup>2</sup> Hesychius explains *κῶμοι* : τὰ ἀσελγή καὶ πορνικὰ ἄσματα : *συμπόσια*.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.



## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

bodies are members of Christ.'<sup>1</sup> The Christian must keep before him the holy figure of his Lord; and bear in mind that he is a member of Him, who was spotless in His purity.

(c) The bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> This figure would appeal most strongly to the Jewish members of the Church. The Temple was to the Jew the one place entirely dedicated to God's service, and was the special place where God manifested His presence. Thus, St. Paul taught, it is with our bodies. In them, God, the Holy Spirit, dwells; through them, He manifests Himself to the world, and Christian lives become the media, through which all men can learn the character of God.

(d) Christians are bought with a price, they are a redeemed people, and belong to God. Therefore they are bound to glorify God in their body.<sup>3</sup> When our bodies are disciplined, and purified, and fitted for His habitation, then God is glorified in them. He is dishonoured when our bodies become the instruments for sin; when they are despised, or neglected, or indulged, or impure.

(e) The consecration of the body to God's service occupies an important place in the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul had stated his doctrine

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. vi. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. vi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. vi. 20.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

of grace, and had dwelt upon the divine mercy. He had broken out into one of his magnificent rhapsodies: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! . . . of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things.'<sup>1</sup> Then comes his appeal: 'I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.'<sup>2</sup> These words express the entire sacrifice of the life to God. The thought of self is merged in the thought of God. We might have expected that this would have been expressed by some such words as 'present your souls,' but St. Paul deliberately says 'present your *bodies*.' In so saying he corrects those who think that if the spirit is right, the actions do not matter. This was the error at Colosse. It is the root-thought of all antinomianism; it is entirely Anti-Christian. It ignores the great mystery of the Incarnation, when the Son of God took to Himself a human body, and the Word became flesh.<sup>3</sup>

By these arguments St. Paul sets forth the positive duty of purity; they have special value in our own day. Modern civilisation addresses

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 33-36.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 12. i.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 14.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

appeals ever more powerful to our bodies. Every craving of the human appetite is provided for, in a manner which is attractive and enticing. Little thought is given as to whether an indulgence of the body is right or wrong as long as it appears desirable. 'Keep thyself pure'<sup>1</sup> should be the motto of those who stand ever in the presence of Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

### (d) ST. PAUL'S TEACHING REGARDING MARRIAGE.

Although the Apostle was by choice a celibate, he did not adopt an ascetic view of marriage. There is no taint of Essenism in his discussion of the question, nor did he give his adherence to those schools of Oriental philosophy which derided all natural inclinations, and looked upon marriage only on one side, regarding it as carnal and sensual.

St. Paul's advice to the Corinthian Church was dictated by the critical character of the times, and by the expectation of a speedy 'Parousia.' He says, 'I think therefore that this is good by reason of the present distress, namely, that it is good for a man to be as he is. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh: and I would spare you.' <sup>1</sup> He ascribes no intrinsic merit either to marriage or to celibacy; both states are allowable. Even second marriages are permitted with the proviso that they are 'In the Lord.'<sup>2</sup>

Although the personal opinion of the Apostle is that a widow will secure her own happiness better by avoiding remarriage, yet it appears that, later in life, he revised his opinion, for he says, 'I desire therefore that the younger widows (or women) marry, bear children, rule the household.'<sup>3</sup>

St. Paul, although guarded in his advice, realised the blessedness of a marriage based upon true love, and uses it as a type of the union between Christ and His Church. He followed the teaching of our Lord in regarding it as indissoluble: 'Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed.'<sup>4</sup> 'I give charge . . . that the wife depart not from her husband . . . and that the husband leave not his wife.'<sup>5</sup> In the event of a wife separating from her husband, she is commanded to remain unmarried, or else to be reconciled to her husband. And the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 26-28.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 39.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. v. 14.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 27.      <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

whole passage is rendered more impressive by the clause, which makes the command, not an opinion of the Apostle, but a judgment of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The relative duties of the husband and wife are clearly laid down. The husband is the head of the wife, and is to love his wife, as Christ loved the Church.<sup>2</sup> As a man loves his own body, so he is to love his wife.<sup>3</sup>

The Apostle regards marriage as effecting a perfect unity between husband and wife; and to emphasise the unity he quotes the Old Testament precept, reinforced by our Lord, 'A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the twain shall become one flesh.'<sup>4</sup> He presents us with an attractive picture of a Christian home, where there is headship in the husband, and subordination in the wife,<sup>5</sup> yet both joined together in the bond of their mutual love.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. vii. 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 28.

NOTE.—On the indissolubility of the marriage tie, F. W. Robertson says, in his sermon on Christian casuistry: 'Marriage is of all earthly unions, almost the only one permitting no change, but that of death. It is that engagement, in which man exerts his most awful and solemn power—the power of responsibility, which belongs to him as one that shall give account—the power of abnegating the right to change—the power of parting with his freedom—the power of doing that which can never be reversed. And yet it is perhaps the relationship which is spoken of most frivolously, and entered into most carelessly and wantonly.'—*Sermons*, third series, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. ii. 24; Mark x. 7; Eph. v. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. v. 24.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

No bitterness<sup>1</sup> mars the union, no hatred dissolves it.<sup>2</sup> This high, pure standard of marriage is one of the fairest fruits of Christian moral teaching, and has elevated the position of women, from the low position they occupied in Jewish and Greek civilisations, to their present position as true help-meets of their husbands. The tendency of modern legislation is in favour of accentuating the independence of married women. It was necessary to protect them from the covetousness or rapacity of their husbands, and the much-needed 'Married Women's Property Act' has given married women control over their own property, as the Common Law protects their persons. The danger is, that the independence gained may degenerate into a separation of interests and pursuits. The safeguard lies in St. Paul's teaching. In it the headship of the husband is clearly laid down; and the spirit in which that headship is to be exercised is the spirit of love. Where there is true love between husband and wife, a recognition that their unity is a real one, there can be no '*meum* and *tuum*'; all things are held in common as a trust from God, to whom account must be given.

St. Paul had not merely to lay down general

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 29.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

rules for the married, but also to consider the special cases where one of the parties was a Christian, and the other an unbeliever. These cases he contemplated as arising out of the past. He does not regard them as possible in the future, for he contemplates future marriages of Christians as being 'In the Lord,' and doubtless included marriage in the command, 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.'<sup>1</sup> In the first stages of the Christian Church there must, however, have been many instances of a husband or wife becoming a Christian and the partner remaining a heathen. To meet such cases the Apostle says, with the sanction of the Lord: 'If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. And the woman, which hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband.'<sup>2</sup> The rule is enforced by the statement, that the unbelieving partner is sanctified by the believing one, and the sanctity of the children is secured. To make the rule more acceptable, the Apostle breaks forth into one of his wonderfully touching appeals. 'How knowest thou, O wife, whether thou wilt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou wilt save

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

thy wife?'<sup>1</sup> What comfort and support this teaching of St. Paul has given in all ages to men and women who have found the unity of their married life threatened by differences of religious belief. It is this high spiritual tone that makes St. Paul's ethical teaching an example to every generation of Christian teachers.

But St. Paul teaches that marriage is not only a social bond, it is also a *μυστήριον*. He says, 'This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church.'<sup>2</sup> *μυστήριον* is used by St. Paul to signify something which cannot be fully comprehended by human reason until assisted by Divine help; or something hidden from men, and afterwards made known by revelation.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Ellicott says,<sup>4</sup> 'It is needless to observe that the words cannot be urged in favour of the sacramental nature of marriage (*Concil. Trid. xxiv., init.*), but it may fairly be said that the very fact of the comparison (see Olshausen) does place marriage on a far holier and higher basis than modern theories are disposed to admit.'

It is this religious side of marriage that the Church is bound to emphasise, and must resist all

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 1; Eph. i. 9, iii. 3; Col. i. 26, *et passim*. It is used in St. Paul's Epistles nineteen times.

<sup>4</sup> In his commentary on *Ephesians*, p. 136.



## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

attempts to reduce it to a mere civil contract, easily made and easily dissolved.

In discussing the relations of married people, St. Paul is not merely general in his teaching. He does not hesitate to lay down rules on the delicate subject of marital relations. He contemplates that these relations may be interrupted for the purpose of entire surrender to prayer; but enjoins that the interruption should be, (*a*) by mutual consent, (*b*) only temporary,<sup>1</sup> lest a continued interruption should lead to the sin of incontinency.

With regard to the celibacy of the clergy, St. Paul's writings show that neither he nor the other Apostles regarded this as a religious duty. He claims the right to lead about a wife, even as the rest of the Apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas.<sup>2</sup> A bishop<sup>3</sup> (or overseer), elders,<sup>4</sup> and deacons<sup>5</sup> must be the husbands of one wife. The meaning of the expression, 'husband of one wife,' has been much discussed. The meaning may be gathered by comparing it with the language of 1 Tim. v. 9, where a widow, in order to be eligible for inscription on the roll of the Church, must have been 'the wife of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Titus i. 6.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 12.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

one man.' This evidently implies that she must not have contracted a second marriage; and we may fairly conclude that the requirement that bishops, elders, and deacons must be the husbands of one wife means that they must have been married only once. In the Eastern Church it was the rule that bishops should not be allowed to marry,<sup>1</sup> but the lower orders of the clergy might marry, but not remarry in the event of the death of their wives.

In the Western Church, the direction of St. Paul regarding the marriage of clergy was not regarded as being a precept of perpetual and universal obligation. Second marriages were forbidden,<sup>2</sup> but the whole question was regarded as disciplinary, and in the *Philosophumena*, by Hippolytus, it is stated that at the beginning of the third century persons who had been married twice, or even thrice, were admitted to be deacons, priests, and bishops.

In giving his injunctions, St. Paul may have had in view the custom among pagans, that their priests should marry only once,<sup>3</sup> and thought it advisable that the Christian Church should not be

<sup>1</sup> Concil. Trull., c. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*, c. 7; 4th Council of Carthage, c. 69. Jerome, *Ad Jovinian.*, 'Digamus in clerum eligi non potest.'

<sup>3</sup> See Jerome, *Ad Agerughiam*.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

less strict than the heathen. The adoption of celibacy by the clergy in the Western Church is a question which belongs to ecclesiastical history, and strong opinions will always be held as to whether it has been a good or an evil. Some of the most splendid Christian characters were formed in monasteries, where celibacy was the rule. Some of the most profligate men in Church history have been professed celibates. Which state is preferable for the clergy will always be a matter of individual opinion. It is sufficient for the purpose of this work to make it clear that St. Paul is not on the side of enforced celibacy.

### (e) RELATIVE DUTIES.

Following upon the subject of marriage, we come to the Christian home, and the social duties of its members in their relations to each other.

That St. Paul attached great importance to the home life of Christians we gather from the following points :

(1) He refers to houses as Church centres. 'Salute Priscilla and Aquila . . . and the Church that is in their house.'<sup>1</sup> Again, writing to Phile-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 3-5 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

mon, he sends greeting to the Church in his house.

(2) He regarded the home as a sphere for acquiring the capacity to preside over the public worship of the Church. The bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house ; and he particularly adds, 'If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God ?' <sup>1</sup>

(3) He taught that the home is a place where piety (*εὐσεβεία*) may be practised.<sup>2</sup>

In St. Paul's view, all human relations were raised by Christianity to new power and influence over the life. Christian homes were capable of being Churches in themselves, centres where the members of the family, and brethren from without, could meet and enjoy the fellowship of worship. 'Here,' as Bartlet says, 'about the family board, where brethren of the household of faith were welcomed with sacred joy, the fellowship to which baptism admitted received its crown. Here the house-father, reverently taking the creatures of the Heavenly Father's bounty, blessed with words of thanksgiving, and distributed among the company, in remembrance of Him whose return was at first daily expected. Then did hearts

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. v. 4.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

burn, and eyes filled with tears of love and joy.'<sup>1</sup>

What an informing picture this presents to us of the home where Christ is loved and honoured. Although we now have in every crowded town, and in every remote village, a place where Christians meet for worship, yet the religion of the home should not be neglected, as it is so often in these later days. Family prayer, if wisely conducted, is a splendid preparation for the duties of the day. A wise control exercised within the family circle may, as St. Paul suggests, train men for wider service. Piety may find a field for growth, in deeds of kindness, which are possible in the home life.

In the present day there is a loud appeal from young members of families for greater liberty of action. On all sides it is noted that children are passing out of the control of parents. May not one cause be, the lack of home religion? and another, the failure of parents to realise their responsibility for the instruction of their children in religion? Religious instruction has in most cases passed from the home to the Church and School. When attendance at these is no longer enforced, the young break away from what they

<sup>1</sup> Bartlet's *Apostolic Age*, p. 465.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

regard as the restraints of religion, and claim to live their own lives in the manner which most appeals to them.

Closely connected with the home life are the precepts which St. Paul gives regarding relative duties. These may be summarised as follows:—

(a) Duties of husbands to wives, and wives to husbands. These have already been considered, and we may pass to

(b) Duties of parents to children, and children to parents. These duties are set forth in the following passages, ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged.’<sup>2</sup>

Simple rules, and yet how little they are observed. Obedience and respect, on the part of children. Self-control in all the vexatious circumstances of daily intercourse,<sup>3</sup> and wise guidance

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 1-4. <sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 20, 21. <sup>3</sup> See Alford's *Greek Testament in loco*.

## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

of young souls that are to be trained for Christ, on the part of parents. How often these are replaced by weak complaisance which overlooks faults, or by harsh severity which genders bitterness and even enmity.

(c) Duties of masters to servants, and servants to masters. In St. Paul's time slavery was universal in the Græco-Roman world. As Christianity attracted to itself many members of the slave class, it was necessary to give advice to Christian masters in their attitude to their bondservants; and also to instruct slaves in their duties to their masters.

The principal duties of slaves are expressed positively and negatively. They are to honour their masters,<sup>1</sup> and to render obedience to them. They are to be solicitous and honest in the faithful performance of their duties, and single-hearted in their service.<sup>2</sup> These are the positive duties. The negative are: they must not act with eye service, merely to please their masters, but to act as the bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. They must not despise their masters, because they are heathen; but manifest trustworthiness, that they may adorn the doctrine of our Saviour God in all things.

Masters are exhorted to act in a kindly manner

<sup>1</sup> I Tim. vi. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 5-8; Col. iii. 22; Titus ii. 9, 10.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

towards their servants, and to forbear threatening ; they are also commanded to render to their servants that which is just and equal, keeping before their minds that they have a Master in heaven.

The conditions of social life in the present day are entirely different from what they were when these precepts were given, and it may be thought unnecessary to repeat them ; but, as we have seen in all St. Paul's treatment of questions of an occasional character, he lays down principles of conduct which are applicable to all time. Kindliness in a master and faithfulness in a servant are never out of date ; and the Christian spirit which breathes in St. Paul's advice is the spirit in which all labour questions should be approached. In the reconstruction of our national life after the war, questions affecting the relations of masters and servants will need all the moderation and grace which St. Paul teaches, if they are to be settled without endangering the very existence of society.

One point, that must ever be kept in the foreground in all questions arising between masters and servants, is fundamental in Christian ethics, viz. : No man has the right to regard another man simply as ' a means ' ; he is bound to look upon him as one who has a definite personality, with the right to make the best of his own



## ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

life, and not as a machine to be used merely to promote the comfort, or to increase the wealth of another.

Before passing from the subject of St. Paul's teaching on the relative duties of masters and servants, a few words must be said with regard to St. Paul's attitude towards slavery. It has been asserted that his teaching tended to rivet the fetters of the slave, because he advised Christian slaves not to seek freedom but to use their condition of bondage to the best advantage. 'Wast thou called being a bondservant? care not for it: but if thou canst become free, use it rather.'<sup>1</sup>

In reply to this criticism, it may be noted that a gospel which taught the value of the individual soul, and declared that there was neither bond nor free in God's sight, must have attracted large numbers of the slave class, and St. Paul saw clearly the possibility that men, excited by the thought of Christian equality, might be tempted to throw off the yoke by violence. This would have resulted in social disorder, and would have drawn upon the Christian Churches the full weight of the Roman power. St. Paul showed true wisdom in leaving existing institutions alone ;

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 21. The interpretation of *μᾶλλον χρῆσαι* has been much disputed. For the authorities see Alford's note on the passage.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

while at the same time he stated principles of brotherhood in Christ, which were bound to act as leaven upon society, and to result in the removal of the curse of slavery from every Christian country. The touching letter to Philemon is in itself a sufficient answer to St. Paul's critics. Onesimus was no longer a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, when he returned as a Christian to his old home.<sup>1</sup> This new relationship involved the charter of freedom to the Christian slave.

<sup>1</sup> Philem. 16.

## CHAPTER XV.

### ST. PAUL AND CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

IT was part of St. Paul's work, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, to make provision for the control and instruction of the converts who formed the various Churches. The first step was the appointment of elders by St. Paul and Barnabas in the cities of Galatia.<sup>1</sup> Many of the converts, being Jews, would readily fall in with an arrangement to which they were accustomed. We learn from the Talmud that in every town and village where there was a synagogue, there was also a local court controlled by the elders of the community. The duties of the court were partly administrative and partly disciplinary, but it had no direct control over the worship or teaching of the assembly. When the Gospel spread to places where a large proportion of the Church members were Gentiles, the appointment of elders would harmonise with the Greek custom of local councils, which, in St. Paul's time, were still called *γερονσίαι*,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 23.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

although they were not confined to the elder members of the βουλή. The exact functions of the 'elders'<sup>1</sup> in the Christian Churches are not defined in the New Testament, but they were certainly not limited to matters of discipline and administration, for the elders at Ephesus were exhorted to take heed to themselves and to the flock, and 'to feed the Church of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood.'<sup>2</sup> In St. Paul's address, from which these words are taken, the 'elders' are called ἐπίσκοποι; they were to watch over the flock, and also to labour to support the weak. The title indicates the exercise of oversight. From the whole passage we gather that the Ephesian elders exercised two functions. They were the rulers of the Church, and they also exercised the pastoral office. A division of these functions is suggested in the later Epistles. Philippians is addressed to the saints, together with

<sup>1</sup> Note on πρεσβύτεροι. 'There is no reason for deeming this technical term a peculiarity of the Jewish idiom. . . . The inscriptions of Asia Minor prove beyond doubt that πρεσβύτεροι was the technical term, in the most diverse localities, for the members of a Corporation. . . . It can be demonstrated that in some islands and in many towns in Asia Minor there was besides the Boulé, also a Gerousia, which possessed the privileges of a corporation, and as it appears, usually consisted of Bouleutes, who were delegated to it, its members were called γέροντες, γερουσιασταί, πρεσβύτεροι, γεραιοί.'—Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 28.

## CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

the bishops and deacons.<sup>1</sup> The bishops probably being the rulers or administrators, and the deacons exercising the ministerial offices. In 1 Tim. 'elders' who rule well (οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες) are declared to be worthy of double honour.<sup>2</sup> In the same Epistles we shall see that different qualifications are required for bishops and for deacons. Two interesting lists of Church officers are supplied to us in St. Paul's writings. These lists are remarkable for

- (a) The officers mentioned ;
- (b) The differences in the two lists ;
- (c) The omissions in both.

The first list in point of time is that contained in 1 Cor.<sup>3</sup> In this, a recognised order of precedence is emphasised. First apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers. Following these, certain spiritual gifts are enumerated, which apparently might be the possession of any member of the Church. The second list is in the Ephesian Epistle;<sup>4</sup> in this we find apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These officers were apparently differentiated in their functions, and the longer list indicates that in the Churches to which the Epistle was written, Church organization was more highly developed than it was when the

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> xii. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 11.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Corinthian Epistle was written. The preaching of the Gospel to the heathen would probably be the work of the 'evangelists,' and the pastoral work of the Church would be the duty of the 'pastors.' The omission of bishops, elders, and deacons from these two lists does not imply that they did not exist in the Churches of Corinth and Proconsular Asia, but rather that the duties of these officials were fulfilled by persons bearing other titles.

We know from the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians that there were presbyters, exercising important functions at Corinth, at the end of the first century. The Epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius prove that bishops held a pre-eminent position in Asia in the first decades of the second century.

St. Paul had taught for long periods in both Corinth and Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> and must have laid the foundation of the ecclesiastical organization in those important centres. Our concern, in this work, is not with the future development of the organization, but to show the teaching of St. Paul regarding the character of the men to whom were entrusted the important duties of building up the

<sup>1</sup> Although the Ephesian Epistle was an encyclical letter, yet a copy would probably be delivered at Ephesus.

## CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

Body of Christ in the various Churches. This information is given in detail in the Pastoral Epistles addressed to Timothy and Titus.

The qualifications of a bishop (ἐπίσκοπος)<sup>1</sup> are carefully elaborated; they may be classified as spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social, and show that only men of high character were to be admitted to the office.

The qualifications are as follows: A bishop must be

- (a) Blameless (ἀνεπίληπτος), *i.e.*, free from the faults he was to reprove in others;
- (b) The husband of one wife (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ)—this probably means, one who had not contracted a second marriage;
- (c) Temperate (νηφάλιος);
- (d) Sober-minded (σώφρων);
- (e) Orderly (κόσμιος);
- (f) Given to hospitality (φιλόξενος);
- (g) Apt to teach (διδακτικός);

<sup>1</sup> 'Of this word as an official title Cremer, p. 889, following Pape, gives only one example outside the N.T. "In Athens the name was applied in particular to able men in the subject states who conducted the affairs of the same." But we find ἐπίσκοποι, as communal officers, in Rhodes, thus in IMAe 49<sub>43 ff</sub> (2nd-1st Cent. B.C.) there is named a council of five ἐπίσκοποι; in 50<sub>34 ff</sub> (1st Cent. B.C.) three ἐπίσκοποι are enumerated. Neither inscription gives any information as to their functions. . . . It is perhaps a more important fact that likewise in Rhodes ἐπίσκοπος was a technical term for the holder of a "religious" office.'—Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 230.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

(h) No brawler (μὴ πάροινος)—according to Hesychius παροινία is ἡ ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου ὕβρις ;

(i) No striker (μὴ πλήκτης) ;<sup>1</sup>

(j) Gentle (ἐπιεικής) ;

(k) Not contentious (ἄμαχος) ;

(l) No lover of money (ἀφιλάργυρος).

In addition, St. Paul required that an ἐπίσκοπος should rule well his own house, so that he might be able to take care of the Church of God. He must not be a novice (νεόφυτος),<sup>2</sup> that is, not a new convert, inexperienced in the Christian faith. He must also be of good repute among those outside the Church. These minute instructions show the anxiety of St. Paul that those called to office in the Church should be men of scrupulous life, qualified both intellectually and morally to exercise their duties, and to be an example to the flock committed to their care.

Further instructions are given regarding 'deacons,' who were probably closely connected with the bishops and assisted them in their duties, with special attention to the ministerial functions, as distinguished from those of ruling.

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogam.*, c. 12 : ' Non manu promptus ad cædendum et pugnax.'

<sup>2</sup> LXX. Ps. 127<sup>3</sup> : νεόφυτα ἐλαιῶν. The word is applied in papyri to newly planted palm-trees.



## CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

They were to be

Grave (σεμνοί) ;

Not double-tongued (μὴ διλόγοι) ;

Not give too much wine (μὴ οἶνω πολλῶ  
προσέχοντες) ;

Not greedy of filthy lucre (μὴ αἰσροκερδεῖς) ;

They were also to hold 'the mystery of faith  
in a pure conscience.'<sup>1</sup>

The qualifications of an 'elder' laid down in the Epistle to Titus are almost identical with those of a 'bishop' in 1 Timothy. There is one important addition; they must be able 'to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gain-sayers.'<sup>2</sup> This clearly implies that their duties included teaching and discipline.

In the Church officers named in the Pastorals high moral character was an essential. Joined with this, they were to possess definite spiritual and intellectual gifts; giving them boldness in the faith and aptitude for teaching. Bishops and elders should be sympathetic and gentle, like their Lord and Master. In the sub-apostolic age great emphasis was laid upon the necessity of Church officers performing their duties in a tender and loving manner. 'Elders' were to be compassionate, merciful to all, turning back the erring, visiting

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Titus i. 9.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

the sick, providing for widows, orphans, and poor.<sup>1</sup> In these injunctions we can recognise the spirit of St. Paul's ethical teaching regarding the qualifications of an officer in the great army of Christ.

In the earlier period of St. Paul's ministry it appears that he personally superintended the Churches which he had founded. He alludes to his anxiety for all the Churches, which was pressing daily upon him. When he knew that his active ministry must soon terminate, we find him appointing Timothy to a special charge in the Church at Ephesus. This charge involved the exercise of discipline in respect of strange or erroneous doctrine.<sup>2</sup> It also included the oversight of the 'elders' and the hearing of complaints against them. His advice to Timothy in regard to accusations is marked by his usual wisdom: 'Against an elder receive not an accusation except at the mouth of two or three witnesses.'<sup>3</sup> Timothy is exhorted thus: 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.'

The Lord's bondservant, in dealing with all questions coming before him, is to be marked by the absence of the spirit of strife. He must be

<sup>1</sup> See Polycarp, *Ad Phil.*, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 28.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. v. 19.

## CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves.<sup>1</sup> In his conduct, he must flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness, faith, love, and peace.<sup>2</sup>

The impressive exhortations addressed to Timothy in the first Epistle have lasting value for all the chief pastors of the Church, and close with the solemn words : ‘O Timothy, guard that which is committed to thee.’<sup>3</sup> He had received the ‘*depositum fidei*,’ to be sacredly guarded by his diligence and efficiency. If he failed to exercise his authority rightly, and placed in positions of responsibility in the Church men who were unfit ; if, in St. Paul’s words, he laid hands hastily—*i.e.*, without due examination—upon men ; then he would be a partaker of their sins, and would be responsible for their failure. In the first Collect for Ember Days the Church of England prays that this tradition may be observed by those responsible for admission to Holy Orders.

A similar commission was given to Titus, another of St. Paul’s faithful companions. In the Churches in the island of Crete there were disorders which called for direct oversight, and the work was entrusted to Titus. He was to set in

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

order the things that were wanting, and to appoint elders in every city.<sup>1</sup> He was to speak, and exhort, and reprove, with all authority.<sup>2</sup> In these commissions we seem to have the beginnings of what in later times developed into the monarchical episcopacy ; but it would be an anachronism to assert that it actually existed in St. Paul's time. He might delegate authority to Timothy and Titus under special circumstances, but he maintained to the end his authority as an Apostle to rule over the Churches he had founded. He laid the foundation, others built upon it ; the Pastorals were reminders to those who followed him to take heed how they builded.

<sup>1</sup> Titus i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Titus ii. 15.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE INFLUENCE OF ST. PAUL'S ETHICS IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

IN the primitive post-apostolic Church, the lofty tone of Pauline ethics, as exhibiting a spiritual principle, upon which the Christian life could be built, became dulled. There was a distinct tendency to assimilate the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to the law of Moses ; by setting forth the Christian ethic as a body of definite precepts, instead of as a spiritual life lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit. These precepts were often stated in a negative form.<sup>1</sup> They were right in themselves ; and in their high teaching of purity, and brotherliness, show the influence of our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Their defect lay in their religious motive. More attention was given to man's moral attitude and conduct, than to the 'spiritual' relation of man to God through faith in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Didaché : *the two Ways*.

<sup>2</sup> See Luthardt, *History of Christian Ethics*, p. 109.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

In later Judaism, moral precepts took the form of a demand on the part of God, and obedience on the part of man. The Divine 'Code' filled the mind's eye, and the call was for self-discipline, which should merit favour and reward, at the hands of the Divine Lawgiver of Israel, and avert the judgments threatened to disobedience. Love for God was not excluded, but it held a less prominent place.

In St. Paul's teaching, the foreground is filled with the figure of Christ, who stands in personal relations to man, and can become the model for all man's relations with his fellows. He teaches that in every Christian life the Spirit of Christ is the energising force. The love of Christ shapes all deeds and all thoughts, and the aim St. Paul has in all his teaching is, that he may present every man perfect in Christ.<sup>1</sup> We recognise that a high spiritual aim is at once the standard, and the motive of the Pauline ethic ; and the practical issue of this more spiritual attitude must be a higher type of conduct than that which springs from a mere legal attitude.

Jewish influences were strong in certain parts of the Church, notably in Syria and Alexandria.

(1) In Syria, the reversion to 'legalism' is seen in the *Didaché*. The 'way of life' is summed up

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 28.

## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

in the two commandments, 'Thou shalt love the God that made thee,' and 'thy neighbour as thyself: whatsoever things thou wouldest not have done to thyself, do not thou to another.'

(2) In Alexandria, legalistic influences operated through the Old Testament Apocrypha, and led to stress being placed on the doctrine of 'works.' In 'Barnabas,' alms, fasting, prayer, and the expiatory value of almsgiving are all set forth, and undoubtedly show Jewish influence.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the high value placed on intellect, as well as 'works,' coincided with the contact of Greek philosophy with Christianity. It is clear that there was a decided falling away from the richer spiritual teaching of St. Paul.

(3) The post-apostolic Church was very largely composed of Gentiles; and they were even less conscious than the Jews of the inherent 'weakness' of the law as 'law'; for they had even less than the Jews sounded the depths which St. Paul knew so well, and felt so acutely.

With these different elements in the Church, it is no marvel that the second generation of Christians should have failed to grasp the spiritual principle of Pauline ethics, and forgot the admonition, 'Walk by the spirit, and ye shall not

<sup>1</sup> Confer Tobit iv. 10, xii. 9.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

fulfil the lusts of the flesh.'<sup>1</sup> The question was not one of piety and zeal, it was one of spiritual experience. Various other explanations are given for what Luthardt calls 'The obscuration of the Pauline notion.'<sup>2</sup> The Tübingen school sought to explain this phenomenon by tracing it to a supposed struggle between Judaic and Gentile Christianity in the post-apostolic Church, and the gradual adjustment of the struggle. But this argument breaks down from the fact that the post-apostolic Church was essentially a Gentile Christian Church. Ritschl in his *Origin of the Catholic Church* derives the dulling of Paulinism, and the rise of a new 'legalism,' from the inability of the Gentiles to grasp the Jewish Old Testament 'presuppositions' which underlay St. Paul's ethical teaching. They naturally brought into the Church the heathen ideas with which they were familiar, and especially heathen moral philosophy. Luthardt<sup>2</sup> agrees with Thiersch in explaining the falling away from Pauline ethics as due to the necessity of opposing Gnostic antinomianism. Definite laws for conduct were used to repel the Gnostic claim for licence in morals, which claim was based on a false interpretation of St. Paul's teaching regarding spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Luthardt, p. 109.



## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

liberty. St. Paul had taught that justification by faith brought a man into right relations with God, and that those relations influenced his whole moral life. When this spiritual attitude was lost sight of, moral conduct gradually assumed the character of 'legality.' Attention was directed more to man's moral conduct than to the religious relationship in which man stands to God ; and even the religious relationship to Christ Himself came to be apprehended as merely the recognition of a rule of faith, and the fulfilment of its law.

The Apologists of the second century brought into prominence the insistence of Christianity upon inward purity, and upon the extension of love even to enemies. Justin Martyr showed how lives were completely changed by Christian teaching, and wrote, ' We, who formerly found pleasure in lust, now find pleasure in moral temperance (*σωφροσύνη*) ; we, who once followed sorcery, have now consecrated ourselves to the good and Unbegotten God ; we, who once loved gain above all things, now give up what we have to the common property ; and share it with all who need.' He endeavoured to identify this morality (*a*) with the universal reason of Stoicism, which he asserted was, in germ,<sup>1</sup> in every man ; (*b*) with the legalism

<sup>1</sup> σπέρμα, hence he derives his doctrine of λόγος σπερματικός.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

of the Jew, who knew as 'Law,' that which by the heathen was called 'Reason.'

In this manner Justin, like other early Apologists, sought to commend Christianity to the heathen world, by showing that it was identical with the primitive truth, which preceded both heathenism and Judaism. Thus in Justin's writings Christianity is represented on the one side as a revelation of the Divine reason, in and through Christ (*ὁ λόγος*), and 'faith' as recognition of this truth; on the other side, it is represented as 'Law' (*ὁ καινὸς νόμος*), which Law was really a restatement of the Law of Creation. It was therefore a law teaching a morality of universal reason. Justin argues that the original truth had been obscured and corrupted by both heathen and Jews, but was now revived in Christ, and was available for the whole human race. It must be carefully noted, that man's relationship to God is not based by Justin upon his spiritual union with Him through Christ (the prominent thought in St. Paul's writings), but depends upon conduct, based upon knowledge; and, consequently, faith becomes merely an act of obedience. Justin, however, agrees with St. Paul in laying down the necessity of repentance, and baptism; the latter bringing about a regeneration by the Holy Spirit, together

## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

with an enlightenment (*φωτισμός*) which leads to a new and higher mode of moral conduct. Justin's purpose was, as we have remarked, to conciliate heathen opponents to Christianity ; and, with this end in view, he attempted to show that Christianity was in agreement with heathen philosophy, in trying to find the path to a higher morality by 'knowledge.' In his endeavour, the revelation of God in Christ was regarded as a 'means' of attaining the higher morality, instead of being regarded as the very 'essence' and 'goal' of Christianity.

When we pass from the Apologists to the Greek Fathers, we find that their ethical teaching is for the most part unsystematic and occasional. But on one point they are strictly in line with St. Paul's ethics. No one can read his Epistles without being struck by his strong advocacy of 'brotherhood.' It is not merely expressed in specific texts, such as : 'In brotherly love be kindly affectioned one to another,'<sup>1</sup> 'Concerning brotherly love, ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another ;'<sup>2</sup> but is manifest in the tender warmth of his feeling towards his brethren and sisters in Christ expressed in almost every page

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 9.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

of his writings. The sense of brotherhood survived in the Church, when it had lost much of the spiritual ethic taught by St. Paul, and the word *φιλαδελφία* is writ large in the Christian life of this period. Its sway is at once the proof and the measure of the hold which the twin truths of Fatherliness in God, and of the value of the human person as related to Him, had really gained upon Christians, however meagre their theoretic insight might be. It involved a revolution in moral ideals. Sympathy took the first place. Service rendered by man to men, benevolence to all in need, became the essence of worship. Kindly actions were the marks of a Christian. The one supremacy in morals was that of conspicuous service in word or deed. An example of this is found in a letter from Dionysius of Corinth (c. 170) to the Roman Church<sup>1</sup>: 'From the first, it has been your practice to do good to all the brethren, and to send sustenance to many Churches, even to those in every city. Thus ye relieve the wants of the needy, and minister to the brethren condemned to the mines.' From this letter it is clear that the Roman Church maintained the spirit of benevolence taught by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, iv. 23.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 13; see also Rom. xv. 27.

## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

After the long struggle against Arianism, during which the attention of the Christian world was directed more to theological than to moral questions, we find in the writings of St. Augustine a return to the Pauline ethic. The four cardinal virtues he sets out as follows : 'temperantia,' in opposition to the love of the world ; 'fortitudo,' as the overcoming of suffering and pain by love ; 'justitia,' as service to God ; and 'prudentia,' as the right distinction between what is to be avoided and what is to be chosen. In these, he taught, lie moral perfection, and they become virtues in so far as they are manifestations of love to God.<sup>1</sup>

Emphasis is laid by Augustine on the inwardness of the disposition towards God, as the all-important factor, on which a true morality is built ; and the imitation of Christ had far more significance to him than it had to the Greek theologians. The moral teaching of the great Latin Father was, however, vitiated by the fact that he did not turn back sufficiently to the central point of the Pauline conception. His interest was not pre-eminently in the personal relationship of the redeemed man to Christ, but rather in a striving after sanctification by the operation of grace conveyed through the Sacraments of the

<sup>1</sup> *De Moribus*, i. 25, 15.

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

Church. In Augustine, as in so many of the early Fathers, the failure to realise a right relationship to God resulted in a failure to find a right relationship to the world. It is not until the time of the Reformation that we find a full recognition of the Pauline starting-point for the universal and absolute imperativeness of all Christian duties. The original antithesis between Christianity and Jewish legalism was revived; and it was maintained that the inwardness of faith was the sole means of attaining eternal life, in contrast to the outwardness of works. All the positive duties of the Christian man remained unchanged, but they did not rest on 'Evangelical counsels.' They found their starting-point in a realised union with Christ, and their inspiration in the working of the Holy Spirit in the regenerated soul. The moral life of the Christian was no longer dependent upon rules of conduct enforced by ecclesiastical authority. Duties were to be performed because of the relation in which man stood to God through Christ; and the moral ideal was no longer the monastic life, with its ascetic rules, but a life of obedience to the revealed will of God, manifested in the perfect life of His Son. Unfortunately, the bitter theological discussions, which followed the Reformation, the rise of antinomianism, springing once more

## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

from a false interpretation of St. Paul's writings, the divisions into which the Church was rent, forced spiritual ethics into the background, and the Reformed Churches followed with little change the ethical teaching of the pre-Reformation period.

### ST. PAUL'S ETHICS AND THE PRESENT AGE.

In the present day there is a strong call upon all Christians to combine for the regeneration and perfecting of society. The utter breakdown of morality, on the part of some of the great nations of the Christian world, is a proof that they have lost sight of all the moral progress achieved since Christ taught men humility and love. The material and scientific developments of our age have absorbed the attention, and prompted the ambitions of great numbers of professing Christians. They have been the real objects of devotion, and God has been forgotten. The result is seen in the great War. The knowledge and resources which might have effected so many beneficent improvements in human life have been applied to destruction. So terrible have been the calamities that to many aching hearts it has seemed as though God had abandoned the world He created. The Christian knows that such an abandonment is impossible,

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

that His purposes of love can never change, and sees in the present crisis a call to deeper faith in Christ, who alone can redeem humanity.

This faith means to us what it meant to St. Paul: an entire trust and surrender of our life to Christ; a real union with Him. We have seen that when this relationship is established, there is not only a fuller sense of man's filial relationship to God, but also an inspiration to new services of love to our fellow-men; services which embrace all human interests. Too many Christians are content to rest upon the joy of their personal relation to Christ, without realising that they should not only receive the things of God, but also set them forth for the benefit of all God's creatures. Those who long to be 'perfect' in Christ, are bound to help in perfecting others. Hence the Church, using the word in a wide sense as embracing all who love and serve Christ, should set forth clearly that the 'perfection,' which is the goal of its members, means not only fellowship with God, but also the perfecting of all human life. In this work St. Paul's ethical teaching will be of the utmost value. An endeavour has been made in this work to show that the great Apostle rightly interpreted the teaching of our Lord, and that he had the mind of Christ; we can therefore



## THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

follow his teaching without any fear of being misled.

When he taught that full-humanity can only be realised 'in Christ,' and that a return to Him must precede a return to God, he did not rest at that point, but went on to call upon his converts to be 'fellow-workers with God.'

This is the call which sounds in our ears to-day. Obedience will be met by opposition from within, for the flesh will still war against the spirit. From without there will be difficulties to overcome, as there were in St. Paul's day. But victory will be won if faith remains unchanged, immovable, undimmed. Nothing could be worse for the world than that the Church should stand aloof from the problems of the future. Such abstention would result in the re-organization of the forces of materialism, in order to assure the triumph of evil, and the calamities of to-day would recur in the future.

If, however, we cling to the belief that the solution of all human problems lies in the following of Christ's teaching; then it is the manifest duty of all who have found their true self in Him to unite in a great effort to reconstruct society on a spiritual basis, and to further the future progress of the world towards spiritual ends. If the work

## ST. PAUL'S ETHICAL TEACHING.

seem too great, we may be encouraged by remembering that the message delivered by St. Paul was given under circumstances far more difficult than those of the present age. He spoke to heathen converts brought up in all the superstitions and abominations of heathenism ; yet his words raised them to an entirely different life, and inspired in them new and eternal hopes. Conscious of their union with Christ, they found in a life directed by His Spirit, an antidote to all evil, a source of deep and abiding peace, and a sphere of service, ever more and more fruitful. Is it too much to hope that in the present day, after centuries of Christian teaching, the same message may be powerful enough to redress the evils that press so heavily upon us ; and raise Christian morality to even higher power than was reached when St. Paul wrote, ' Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement, of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.

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